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Changing perceptions of New Left radicalism in the United States, 1960-1992.

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CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF NEW LEFT RADICALISM IN THE UNITED STATES, 1960-1992

by

Michael John Van Raalte

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ABSTRACT

Commentators on the 1960's New Left movement have tended to focus on three major historical questions:

1) Why did student radicalism emerge when it did; what social conditions catalysed such a protest, and what caused the disintegration of the movement's political organization by 1970?

2) What was the role of human agency in the development of the 1960s? Was the course of history pre-determined or could alternative strategies have generated different results?

3) What were the consequences of the protester's actions: what legacy did the student protesters leave behind?

The approach taken to deal with these questions hinges on the analyst's political ideology. Between 1960 and 1980, Liberal intellectuals put together various theoretical arguments which developed into the first consensus on student unrest. Ignoring the ideology of the student radicals, they stressed unconscious motivational forces to explain the protester's actions and emphasized the harmful consequences of the movement's legacy. Focusing on the sociological and psychological background of the individuals who formed the student movements, they presented the protesters as social deviants who were psychologically disturbed. This viewpoint effectively depoliticized the grievances, which the students argued, laid behind their anger.

In the past several years, however, a number of radical historians, sociologists and political scientists have begun retracing the origins and development of the New Left movement of

the 1960s. Much of the thrust behind this rejuvenated interest has come from former student activists themselves who are now established within the universities. Aspiring to politically mobilize their readers by reshaping their memory of the New Left, recent commentators portray the movement as a heroic inspiration for today. They argue that student radicals were consciously inspired to act because of their desire for progressive change.

In tracing the historiography of the New Left from the 1960s to the present, this paper will reveal how the narrow research focus on student unrest has limited our comprehension of the issues of the age. To understand the "meaning" of the 1960's social unrest, historians must redirect the terms of the debate away from irrelevant questions over motivation and back to the ideas themselves.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1960s, a new school of revisionist historiography has challenged prevailing assumptions about the objectivity of those who write history.[1] These analysts have persuasively contended that the ideal of impartiality within the profession is impossible. Criticizing those "noble" historians who believe that by applying scientific methods, they can arrive at some truth about the past, these revisionists have pointed instead to various political biases which continue to undermine researchers' attempts to be balanced in their investigations. The relativist critique of the historical profession has lead to what Peter Novick describes as a "period of confusion, polarization and uncertainty, in which the idea of historical objectivity has become more problematic than ever before."[2]

No longer can historians reasonably assume they are relating the past "as it really happened;" increasingly it became apparent that writers have to be satisfied with presenting merely one historical perspective.[3] These changes occurring within the

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[1]See for example, Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and The American Historical Profession (New York, 1988). David W. Noble, The End of American History (Minneapolis, 1985).

[2]Novick, Noble Dream, 16.

[3]The phrase "as it really happened" comes from German historian Leopold von Ranke. Turn-of-the-century American historians, inspired by von Ranke, established tight methodological guidelines to their discipline. By relying only on the "facts" these researchers believed they were ensuring value-free investigations. As later historians argued, however, the choice of which "facts" to include is subjective (See Novick, That Noble Dream, 4).

discipline lead some historians to question the reasons for the subject's existence. If there could be no "true" history, many began to wonder, why should we study the past at all? What purpose could possibly be served other than to satisfy antiquarian interests?[4] In recent years, several historians have begun studying the social and ideological uses of history, and they have suggested that historical theories have played prominent roles in setting public policies. In other words, they have argued that influential historical interpretations are powerful tools which can be exploited by various political interests to mobilize public opinion behind major policy initiatives.[5]

Revisionists such as Novick have drawn several parallels between the myth of objectivity in the social sciences and the entrenchment of liberal pluralist thinking in politics, revealing how closely the two ideals have complemented each other in the past. Liberal theorists of the 1950s and 1960s such as Richard Hofstadter and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. assumed that they could establish with reasonable certainty various truths about the human condition through the use of empirical methodology. By balancing evidence and carefully weighing all points of view, they believed that expert researchers could make judgements that were fair and reasonable. Guided by the false supposition that decisions made

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[4]By "antiquarian," I am referring to that type of history which conveys historical information without providing an interpretive framework.

[5]Peter Novick, for example, is presently researching the sociological, political and ideological uses of the history of the Holocaust.

through pragmatism and compromise were less biased and thus superior to those made through ideological rigidity, they created various principles which helped legitimize the public agenda of moderates in the political center.[6]

There can be no doubt that many American public policies have been adopted primarily because they were solidly backed by widely accepted liberal historical interpretations. The public's understanding of the origins of World War II, for example, has led many to fear policies such as isolationism and appeasement. If only Hitler had been stopped earlier, the argument runs, then the immense bloodshed could have been avoided. This powerful myth has provided American political leaders with a strong rationale for military ventures around the world, ranging from Vietnam to Desert Storm. Similarly, the justification for the welfare state and government intervention in the economy is partially based on the theory that the Great Depression was caused exclusively by the failures associated with a market economy.

While critics of the liberal consensus have subsequently proposed many alternative interpretations to these historical questions, they have not as yet been able to capture the public's imagination.[7] Those who disagree with the welfare state, or

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[6]What they failed to account for was that liberalism in itself was an ideology with its own system of ideas and theories. The model of objectivity favoured these thinkers because its central assumptions were liberal (i.e rationality, empiricism etc). See Novick, That Noble Dream, 281-361.

[7]See for example, A. J. P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (London, 1961); Alan Greenspan, "Gold and Economic Freedom," in Ayn Rand ed., Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal (New York,

alternatively with an interventionist foreign policy, face the same criticism - that they have failed to learn the lessons from history and are bound to repeat the errors of the past. With the demise of objectivity, however, ingrained liberal explanations for past events have increasingly come under attack. Recognizing the interrelationship between the pretence of detached scholarly objectivity and the central values of liberalism, radical scholars such as Novick have begun re-examining a number of previous inquiries in order to determine how political biases have influenced the conclusions reached by historians.[8]

II

Perhaps there is no particular time period undergoing such intense re-examination by analysts of all political persuasions than the decade of the 1960s. Over the past several years a flood of books, movies and documentaries have appeared intending both to address a variety of intellectual debates and to recapture the radical spirit of the decade. This intense preoccupation has emerged because so many of the issues that predominate in our present-day political climate first arose during these tumultuous years. While some look back to the decade and see in it the explanation for many of the United States' current problems, others nostalgically look back to the 1960s for an inspirational model of

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1962), 96-101.

[8]See also Patricia Morton, Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women (New York, 1991).

social change.[9] Taken together, these recent efforts have helped expand our understanding both about the people who lived through the decade and about the nature of the historical profession itself.

Many researchers have tended to focus on the student movement known as the New Left and specifically on the actions inspired by their political organizations, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC). These groups, almost everyone agrees, organized much of the political agitation characteristic of the era and laid the groundwork for much contemporary political activism. While it seems that commentators have formed a common impression of what actually happened (i.e. the important historical events of the decade), debate persists over how the student radicals should be portrayed in the history texts.

Several theoretical questions are still under consideration. These include, but are not limited to, the following:
First, why did the New Left emerge when it did; what were the origins of the movement? What social conditions in the 1960s catalysed such a protest, and what caused the disintegration of the movement's political institutions by 1970? Second, what was the role of human agency in the developments of the 1960s? Were students "active agents" consciously attempting to initiate reform efforts, or alternatively passive subjects acted upon, merely

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[9]Maurice Isserman, "The Not-So-Dark and Bloody Ground: New Works on the 1960s," American Historical Review 95 4 (1990), 990.

responding to change? Was the course of history pre-determined: in other words, were the 1960s radicals only vehicles of socio-economic forces, or could alternative strategies have generated different results? What choices did student leaders ever really have? Third, what were the consequences of the protesters' actions: what kind of legacy did the student protesters leave behind? What were the radicals' most significant accomplishments and most glaring failures? More specifically, what impact did New Left philosophy have on how Americans perceived their country and its institutions?

The perspective taken to deal with these questions, it seems, hinges on the author's relationship to the subject and on his/her own political ideology. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the various perceptions of the student radicals from the 1960s to the present day. I wish specifically to come to a better understanding of how the New Left's emergence and decline has been and continues to be portrayed through the dominant literature and media. My thesis, therefore, will not focus so much on the events of the 1960s themselves, as on the patterns of interpretation from the 1960s to the present.[10] What appears clear to me is that the

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[10]In defining which groups constitute the New Left, I will limit the focus of discussion, as most others commentators do, primarily to the white student Left. While black activists of the 1960s were integral members of a widespread movement for social change, their organizations were separate from the white student Left and their histories quite distinct. Civil rights organizations such as CORE and the NAACP existed far earlier then the student radicalism of the 1960s, and while their strategies influenced the white Left, the two social movements grew in different ways. I will also avoid discussing in any great detail the feminist and gay rights movements of the 1970s. These later

passing of thirty years has not been able to erase strong emotional feelings on all sides. The persistence of past conflicts in present historical interpretations makes the chances of an eventual consensus of opinion on the decade unlikely. Almost from the emergence of the movement, observers have debated the relevance of ideas as the motivation for the activists' behaviour. On the one hand, student intellectuals perceived their emerging movement as a serious critique of contemporary society. Pressing and unresolved political issues at home as well as the exploitive nature of American foreign policy abroad were most often cited as the motives for radical action. When confronted with the reality of the contradictions in American society, students acted on their moral conscience and ideals. In the words of Jack Newfield, an early student activist: "The New Radicalism...seems, at bottom, an ethical revolt against the...hypocrisy that divides America's ideals from its actions."[11] This viewpoint, stressing the New Left's political agenda as the motivation behind radicalism, typifies how most activists have perceived their movement from the 1960s to the present day.

Critics of the New Left, on the other hand, have focused not so much on the ideology, but instead on the people who came to hold these beliefs. Suggesting that student radicalism was an aberration unique to the 1960s, these analysts have been more

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groups were undoubtedly inspired by the student revolts of the 1960s, but their agendas were autonomous and their members did not necessarily share New Left values.

[11]Jack Newfield, A Prophetic Minority (New York, 1966), 22.

interested in examining the personalities behind the social turmoil rather than seriously challenging the New Left's political ideas. Stressing unconscious structural and psychological motivating factors to explain student unrest, such commentators have depoliticized the grievances and the issues which the students argued lay behind their anger and portrayed the radicals themselves either as psychologically disturbed or as social deviants. By emphasizing the irrational nature of those involved within the student movement, critics have attempted to dismiss the agenda of the New Left entirely.[12]

It is my contention that the present cleavages dividing historians will never be resolved. How the New Left is to be understood as an ideology will be determined by those who have the greatest power to make their interpretations heard. While it is difficult to predict future research patterns, there are patterns of interpretations from the past which can be recognized. To understand the perspectives guiding both the student radicals, and those who analyzed them, it is necessary first of all to understand the assumptions that created them in the first place. Chapter one of this paper will describe how the majority of American intellectuals came to a political consensus in the 1950s. In an era of national self-congratulation, tensions eroded amongst many

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[12]For a summary of some of the more common themes of these writings, see: Seymour L. Halleck, "Hypotheses of Student Unrest," in J. Foster and D. Long eds., Protest! Student Activism in America (New York, 1970); J. H. Block, Norma Haan and M. Brewster Smith, "Activism and Apathy in Contemporary Adolescents," in J. H. Adams ed., Understanding Adolescence: Current Developments in Adolescent Psychology (Boston, 1968).

of the various groups competing for power in the United States. Intellectuals who had flirted with radicalism in the 1930s began to shun passionate political convictions, calling instead for an "end to ideology." Satisfied with occupying what Arthur Schlesinger called the "vital center," most of these "liberal" thinkers grew extremely confident about America's future and believed that major reforms were both unnecessary and unwise. This conformist intellectual mood resulted in the marginalization of critics and often the purging of radicals, both left and right, from positions of authority. In this political environment, very few could possibly have predicted the emergence of the New Left movement by 1960. An analysis of both liberal writers and those marginalized groups outside the consensus, however, will reveal that a great many influential ideas were formulated during this time. Both the students and their critics owed a great deal to their intellectual forebears of the 1950s.

Chapters two and three will focus on the development of student radical thought from 1960 to 1970.[13] While student protesters throughout the 1960s consistently stressed the moral necessity of their actions, the movement's intellectual mood radicalized as it matured, with the acceleration of more dramatic anger and hostility in later years. The writings clearly show an increasing disillusionment with the traditional American economic,

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[13]Here I will be concentrating my analysis only on the principal sources written during the 1960s. As the movement's leadership was overwhelmingly dominated by white males, it will be their perspective primarily described.

political and social structures over time. Early leaders believed that change was possible by extending democracy to groups not taking full advantage of their constitutional rights. Later radicals, however, increasingly came to perceive the entire political system as corrupt, a capitalist tool in which the wealthy dominated and controlled the process.

Chapter four will examine the various academic theories of student unrest that were presented during the 1960s. Imbued with liberal values stressing compromise and pragmatism, most academics simply could not envision a radical critique of the status quo. Consequently, they searched for alternative sociological and psychological explanations for student activism and suggested varying proposals to solve the nation's "youth problem." These studies effectively shifted the emphasis away from the social issues, placing it instead on the critics who demanded reforms. By the late 1960s, very few outside the movement were paying much attention to the ideas of the radicals. The tendency instead was to dismiss the movement's political agenda because it was created by maladjusted youth.

Chapter five will describe how historians, sociologists, political scientists and former New Left leaders in the late 1960s and early 1970s came to assess the consequences of student unrest. The criticisms against the students intensified in later years as the movement became more militant and focused some of its attacks on the university itself. The New Left was accused of everything from denying academic freedom to attacking individual rights.

Liberals blamed the radicals for the growth of the conservative counter-revolution in the United States. Conservatives condemned the New Left for America's military troubles in Vietnam. The older generation of Leftists, for the most part, perceived the student radicals as insincere and spoiled and accused them of fragmenting their fragile social movement into several different groups. Very few reviewers, including former student radicals themselves, were positive about the movement's accomplishments. There was a growing sense of defeatism amongst the radicals, with many of their writers beginning to assume an apologetic tone. This theme of the disillusioned former New Leftist predominated throughout the writings of the 1970s.

The final chapter will focus on contemporary portrayals of the student radicals of the 1960s. While critics have maintained a consistent point of view in how they have assessed the New Left's origins and legacy, the radicals have splintered into at least three different groups. There is a tendency among those involved in the early New Left (1960-65) to glorify their own accomplishments and dissociate their movement from what came later. Writers who were involved in the later movement (1966-70), however, portray early radicals as naive and ignorant about how American politics works. A third body of former student radicals became disenchanted with the entire movement, dismissing their association with the New Left as the product of youthful utopian dreaming. Almost all contemporary writers share the common belief that the student movement was a major catalyst for the tremendous social

changes initiated during the 1960s.

The overwhelming majority of recent commentaries about the New Left are much more positive about what the movement achieved in comparison to those that were written in the past. While the critics' interpretation is still the predominant image of the New Left, it is finally being seriously challenged by former radicals. Now that the voices of those with more positive things to say about the movement can be heard, a new radical perspective on student unrest may emerge within the next few years.

CHAPTER ONE: AMERICA'S POLITICAL CLIMATE ENTERING THE 1960S

INTRODUCTION:

An understanding of the various perspectives on student radicalism requires a thorough recognition of the assumptions which guided those who wrote them. Almost every evaluator who has written about the 1960s lived through the time period and was affected in some way by student unrest. Consequently, their approaches to the subject are highly subjective, resting on their perceptions of the student movement while it was happening. These authors' attitudes, for the most part, were not constructed merely as responses to student unrest, but extended from political ideals first conceived in earlier eras. Nearly every reviewer of the New Left movement was shaped to some extent by the political climate of the 1950s, whether they were youngsters "coming of age" or academics reassessing their responses to rapidly changing conditions. How these individuals reacted to the New Left thus depended on their political orientation independent of the movement's existence. This chapter will examine the various political points of view formulated in the decade immediately preceding the emergence of the New Left. It is hoped through this investigation that a proper groundwork can be established to help explain why the debate over student unrest became so controversial.

The 1950s is most often remembered as a period of relative domestic stability and tranquillity in the United States after a generation of economic depression, scarcity, class warfare and

ideological conflict in the 1930s and 1940s.[1] Most historians agree that this growing sense of security was a welcome relief to the majority of Americans, exhausted from the destructive and regressive consequences of revolution, social convulsion and dramatic upheaval abroad.[2] The economy was recovering and unemployment was down; most people, it seemed, simply wanted to get on with their lives and start afresh. The most obvious expression of this post-war optimism was the "baby boom" explosion, as millions of young Americans flooded out into the suburbs to raise a family.[3]

Historians have often portrayed white middle-class Americans in the 1950s as both "conformist" and "apathetic" because of the lack of radicalism expressed at the time.[4] Charles C. Alexander, for example, describes the 1950s as a "homogenized" society, with the "archetypal American" carrying on "an obsessive quest for

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[1]See for example, David A. Shannon, Twentieth Century America (Chicago, 1969); Daniel Boorstin, The Americans: The Democratic Experience (New York, 1973); Mary Beth Norton et al., A People and a Nation: A History of the United States 3rd ed., (Boston, 1990).

[2]The only real debate amongst historians centers on the question as to how this period compares to others in American history. Most historians have traditionally portrayed this period as a return to normalcy after decades of social upheaval. More recently, the trend has been to portray Americans in the 1950s as eccentric, overwhelmingly concerned with restoring an equilibrium that never really existed before. See Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound (New York, 1988).

[3]From 1946 through 1964, 75.9 million babies were born in the United States, compared with only 44.4 million during the period of depression and war (1929-45). Suburban growth was also extensive, from 19.5% of the U.S. population in 1940 to 30.7% in 1960. See Norton et al. A People and a Nation, 879-902.

[4]See Norton et al. People and a Nation, 879-902.

personal security" and continually adapting and readjusting his/her "personality and behaviour to the changing collective aspirations, life styles, and idea patterns of peer groups and society as a whole."[5] Elaine Tyler May has reinforced this depiction, going so far as to argue that the 1950s obsession with conformity and domesticity is a uniquely distinguishing characteristic of this time period, emerging primarily as a "buffer" against the cold war and the complications of modern life.[6] Both historians agree that there was an unusual lack of individual autonomy and a seeming indifference to social problems exhibited by the majority during this time.

In explaining why these views made sense to their subjects, both Alexander and May concentrate almost exclusively on changing social variables such as family life and material conditions. In doing so, they tend to neglect the intellectual basis for these kinds of attitudes. White middle-class Americans were sympathetic and concerned with the well being of the dispossessed in their society but they just did not believe that radical solutions were worth pursuing. As psychologist Kenneth Keniston would later point out, these people thought that "meaningful social change" was most likely to occur through "gradualism" and "piecemeal social

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[5]Charles C. Alexander, Holding the Line: The Eisenhower Era, 1952-1961 (Indiana, 1975); reprinted in A. M. Winkler ed. The Recent Past: Readings on America since World War II (Miami, 1989), 94.

[6]May, Homeward Bound.

reform."[7] One of the reasons why they had come to reach this conclusion was because university professors as well as media leaders had taught them to think this way.

THE LIBERAL ESTABLISHMENT AND THE "END OF IDEOLOGY"

While it would be inaccurate to argue that there was complete political unanimity in the 1950s, there was a great deal of consensus among most individuals occupying the key positions of power in American society. Most media leaders, university professors, government bureaucrats as well as corporate business executives were in basic agreement concerning several key social, economic and political positions. This "*liberal establishment*," as later commentators have called it, was optimistic about the future of the nation, believing the United States was well on its way to reaching social equality. Following along the Keynesian policies initiated during Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal era, liberals contended that a mixed economy with welfare state prosperity would bring justice and contentedness to all given the proper time.[8]

The liberal consensus was led by a number of prominent intellectuals: including historians Arthur Schlesinger and Richard Hofstadter, sociologists Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset, philosopher Lewis Feuer, and political scientist Irving Kristol.

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[7]Kenneth Keniston, Youth and Dissent: The Rise of a New Opposition (New York, 1970), 373.

[8]For a more in depth treatment of the "liberal establishment," see Alan Matusow's, The Unravelling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s (New York, 1984).

In their work, these liberal commentators emphasized that the key to both economic prosperity and social contentedness was finding the proper balance between government intervention and free enterprise. While capitalism was considered the most effective economic system for increasing the nation's wealth, they believed it lacked the proper safeguards and restrictions from which to maintain order. Central planning was required to oversee the entire economic structure and make it function more equitably and efficiently. As historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. proclaimed, "the state should aim at establishing conditions for economic decisions, not at making the decisions itself."[9] Inspired by the writings of John Kenneth Galbraith, especially The Affluent Society (1958), Schlesinger and other liberal commentators prescribed a moderate extension of welfare policies and an influx of pragmatic federal policies to accelerate economic growth and to end poverty and unemployment.

To put these programs into action, the United States required "enlightened social engineers" to develop them. Daniel Bell and others believed that with the growth of technical expertise and specialization, many of the decisions of the modern age were beyond the competence of the informed public. Government initiatives, therefore, were increasingly to reflect expert knowledge and planning.[10] These government bureaucrats, Bell and other liberals

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[9]Arthur Schlesinger Jr., The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom (Boston, 1949), 182.

[10]See Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology (Glencoe, 1960).

assumed, would be benevolent and objective in their rationalizations and would have no self-interested or non-altruistic motivations to distract them from the public interest.

According to most within the consensus, with the emerging technotronic society, power would lie increasingly not with those who possess economic capital, but rather, those who possess educational "capital." This new class structure implied a new purpose for the university: the production of managers for an ever increasing industrial sector. As Clark Kerr, the chancellor of Berkeley University argued, it was up to the university, or "multiversity" as he called it, to function as the training ground for young technocrats. The "knowledge industry" would centre above all in the professoriate and in the universities, and would be the "central motor of historical change." Upon leaving universities, students were to take their places "at the machine."[11]

Most liberal intellectuals did not dispute this vision but actually encouraged it. There was very little room in academic circles for disagreement, and social critics both on the left and right were openly purged and denied positions of authority. These policies were justified on the grounds that both radicals and reactionaries were considered social deviants or psychologically disturbed and thus dangerous.[12] The public interest, argued

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[11]Clark Kerr, Industrialism and Industrial Man, (Cambridge, 1960).

[12]See Daniel Bell et al. The Radical Right (New York, 1963) for liberal perceptions of conservative thinkers. The radical right appeared in this volume as irrational and emotional deviants afraid of change and preoccupied with their economic and social status.

Richard Hofstadter, was best served by the pluralistic commitment to modest, limited expectations and inevitable compromise. History becomes tragedy, concluded the mainstream American historian, whenever a person or a people claimed that their position was entirely valid and that all other positions were in absolute error.[13]

Liberals regarded ideology as increasingly irrelevant with the complications of modern life. The solutions as proposed from the old ideologies seemed too simplistic and easy, and as Daniel Bell argued, "Few serious minds believe any longer that one can set down 'blueprints' and through 'social engineering' bring about a new utopia of social harmony."[14] Intellectuals such as Bell, along with Seymour Martin Lipset, philosopher Louis Feuer and others proclaimed that America was entering a new era known as the "end of ideology." With the decline in absolute principles in favour of political expedience, "practicality" and "compromise" there would be a lack of passion or emotional energy to channel. The workers would be satisfied, there would be no class struggle and people would look to the present rather than to some utopian future.[15]

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[13]Richard Hofstadter, summarized in David Noble, The End of American History, (Minneapolis, 1985), 116. Hofstadter was especially impressed with Franklin D. Roosevelt's pragmatic realism: the New Deal was not a "philosophy," he argued, "but an attitude," taking the initiative to serve the broadest public needs. See The Age of Reform (New York, 1955), 325.

[14]Bell, End of Ideology, 373.

[15]Bell, End of Ideology, 373. see also: Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (New York, 1955); Raymond Aron, The Opium of the Intellectual (New York, 1957); Edward Shils, "The End of Ideology?" Encounter, 5 (Nov. 1955). Lewis S. Feuer,

Rejecting Marx's theory of class conflict, Bell, Lipset and others began to argue that democracy could only be sustained by a pluralistic conflict of countervailing interest groups. Equally fearful of centralization as well as "working class authoritarianism," they believed that it was necessary to balance countervailing forces in order to preserve social stability.[16] "A stable democracy," argued Seymour Martin Lipset, "requires the manifestation of conflict or cleavage so that there will be struggle over ruling positions, challenges to parties in power, and shifts of parties in office."[17] Without such offsetting forces there would be no restraints on political power. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. agreed, perceiving conflict as both the United States' "central strength," and its "guarantee" of freedom.[18]

Lipset and Schlesinger's focus on the need for balance was profoundly influenced by how they perceived the political events overseas in the 1930s and 1940s. The Soviet experience under Stalin and the rise of fascism in Western Europe convinced these liberals that human nature was, as Schlesinger explained, "imperfect" and that the "corruptions of power could unleash great evil in the world."[19] With no constraints on their political

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Psychoanalysis and Ethics (Springfield, 1955); Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man (Garden City, 1960).

[16]John Diggins, The American Left in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1973), 141.

[17]Lipset, Political Man, 21.

[18]Schlesinger, Vital Center, 256-6.

[19]Schlesinger, Vital Center, ix.

power, totalitarian leaders such as Stalin and Hitler were able to sacrifice public needs to serve their own selfish ends. They pursued an aggressive foreign policy to maintain the pretences of a nationalist purpose and keep internal opposition low.[20]

From this perspective, liberal political scientists such as Zbigniew Brzezinski and George Kennan traced the origins of the cold war. The United States, these analysts assumed, had nothing to gain from an ideological showdown with the Soviet Union but had been provoked into pursuing an internationalist foreign policy because of the excesses of totalitarianism. According to Kennan and Brzezinski, the Soviet Union was running an international communist empire with hopes of eventually overturning capitalism worldwide. Avoiding direct conflicts with the United States, communists preferred seizing the opportunities when they were available.[21]

In response to the Soviet "threat," Kennan believed the United States should "remain vigilant" and hold the line. "The conduct of foreign relations ought not to be conceived as a purpose in itself," he argued, "but rather as one of the means by which some higher and more comprehensive purpose is pursued."[22] Kennan advised American leaders to pursue fixed and limited objectives and be realistic about what they could accomplish. Rather than

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[20]See Zbigniew Brzezinski, Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics (New York, 1962) 92.

[21]See George F. Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy (Princeton, 1954).

[22]Kennan, Realities, 7.

attempting to liberate countries already behind the "Iron Curtain," policy makers should "contain" communism where it was, aiming for "peaceful co-existence."[23] In Kennan's opinion, "containment" was a necessary strategy to avoid nuclear war.

The idea of Soviet global expansion disturbed liberals so much because they believed that the United States had a "meaning and relevance" for the world as a whole.[24] The "hopes of the world's peoples," according to Walter Rostow, the economic historian, depended on the United States mobilizing its "strength, will and imagination" to "determine the outcome of the world's history." It was in the United States' national interest to ensure that all countries economically develop along the lines broadly consistent with the American humanistic principles. As each society was in a different "stage" in its economic growth, Rostow contended, it was wrong for Americans to morally judge the present day feudal political arrangements in lesser developed nations. What was important was to ensure that as these more primitive nations modernized, they followed the American model and assumed American democratic values.[25]

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[23]Kennan, Realities, 4-12.

[24]W. W. Rostow, The United States in the World Arena (New York, 1960), 538.

[25]Rostow, The United States, 538-543. The ethnocentricity permeating through Rostow's commentary is highly noticeable. To imply that one way of living is more or less advanced than another not only suggests a cultural superiority, but takes it for granted that people in traditional societies want to or need to modernize. Events such as those that occurred in the early 1980s in Iran, for example, suggest that this assumption might be false.

Intellectuals such as Rostow and others were especially interested in understanding why the United States had avoided the intensity of ideological politics that had so disrupted the other modern industrial societies in Europe. It seemed that the sociological theories based in Europe were inadequate for the American experience. The United States seemed to be unique, apart, and "exceptional." Consensus historians such as Richard Hofstadter and Arthur Schlesinger, as well as political scientist Louis Hartz, in re-examining the nation's past, argued that the United States was not simply reaching the end of an ideological age, but rather that the nation had almost never experienced rigid absolutism. The American experience was vastly different from Europe because it lacked a feudal heritage and the existence of aristocratic values and repression. The United States had a democratic populist tradition with an emphasis throughout its past on common people. Its liberal institutions were able to support conflict and disagreement as well as sustain legitimacy and consensus. An "open" society devoid of class and rigid status groups with a high rate of social mobility, the nation was thus able to defuse class resentments and antagonisms.[26]

The "mission" of the United States, these commentators argued, was to dedicate itself to ensuring the continuing triumph of

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[26]See for example: Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (New York, 1955). Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York, 1955). David Potter, People of Plenty (Chicago, 1954). Since these commentators believed that communism was imported from Europe and not part of the American identity, they did not perceive themselves in the midst of an internal ideological conflict.

liberalism. A permissive and compromising society, the American experience compelled all new cultures to assimilate democratic principles and values as they adjusted to their new environment. McCarthyism, the red scare and other forms of extremism, liberals believed, were aberrations and foreign to the American national character.[27] This final condemnation was the most destructive to critics of contemporary society. Radicals had the undesirable challenge of proving not only that their criticisms were valid but also that their values were American.

CRITICS OF THE LIBERAL CONSENSUS

In an era in which the overwhelming majority of Americans perceived that their country was engaged in a moral struggle with communism abroad, they considered it unpatriotic to challenge to the status quo. Consequently, most intellectuals shunned revolutionary political convictions and instead actively supported their government. There was some radical activity, however, and although often marginalized in the press and in academic circles, the issues raised by these groups did have some impact on how people felt about their country. By far the most powerful opposition groups to liberalism were those which argued from various conservative ideological positions.

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[27]Liberals such as Richard Hofstadter explained reactionary movements such as McCarthyism as a form of "status anxiety" in groups "tormented by a nagging doubt", as to whether they were really American. While claiming to uphold tradition, Hofstadter argued, these groups in reality were projecting their own fears and frustrations onto society. See the various essays contained in Bell, The Radical Right cited in note 12 above.

CONSERVATISM IN THE LATE 1950S

Ever since the time of Franklin D. Roosevelt, hard-line opponents of the New Deal had attempted to organize an effective political alternative to liberalism. There were some, such as former president Herbert Hoover and senator Robert Taft, who believed that the main problem facing the United States, and indeed all of humanity, was *collectivism*, the tendency for the state to organize and control all social life.[28] Opposing the intervention of government into the economy and insisting upon a strict interpretation of the American constitution, they had led a sustained critique throughout the 1950s of both the enlarging welfare state and the progressive reforms initiated through various judicial decisions of the Warren Court. The late 1950s, however, was a pivotal time for this conservatism: New Deal liberalism had been in place for a generation, leaving what one historian calls an "indelible mark on American politics."[29] To become political contenders again, conservatives would have to reconstruct their ideology and build a sustained, independent movement.

The conservative intellectual movement of Taft and Hoover was thus in a state of uncertainty, further burdened in struggling to dissociate itself from the largely discredited McCarthyist purges of the early 1950s. Confused followers seemed unable to decide

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[28]Jerome L. Himmelstein, To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism, (Berkeley, 1990) 6. See also Albert Jay Nock, Our Enemy, The State (New York, 1935).

[29]Himmelstein, To the Right, 7.

upon a strategy. Nowhere was the decline of conservatism as an ideology more apparent than within the traditional political voice of the right, the Republican party itself. The party was controlled by moderates, rather than hard-liners: political positions established during the Eisenhower years reflected an acceptance of liberal positions and tended to reinforce various welfare policies established earlier. The president perceived himself as a compromiser, "conservative when it comes to money and liberal when it comes to human beings."[30]

To many within the movement, this political manoeuvring seemed, as novelist Ayn Rand argued, "evasive, guilty, apologetic, and above all timid."[31] Infighting consequently developed between various divergent factions for political power. Rather than establishing a strong moral base and firm principles to confront liberal consensus politics, the conservative movement entering the 1960s was increasingly unsettled. There seemed to be no coherent plan, no consistent strategy for the future.

Historian George Nash describes this lack of direction in his book: The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945. The author maintains that three loosely related groups were evolving on the right during this period: *traditionalists* (new conservatives) appalled by the erosion of moral religious values

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[30]As quoted in Norton et al. A People and a Nation, 857.

[31]Ayn Rand, "Conservatism: An Obituary," based on a lecture given at Princeton University on December 7, 1960. Reprinted in Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal (New York, 1967), 195-6.

and the emergence of a secular, rootless, mass society; *libertarians*, apprehensive about the threat of the State to private enterprise and individualism; and *disillusioned ex-radicals and their allies*, alarmed by international communism. As Nash rightly points out, "no rigid barriers separated these groups. Traditionalists and libertarians were usually anti-communists, while ex-communists generally endorsed free-market capitalism and Western traditions."[32] There were however, some seemingly irreconcilable differences over principles between hard-liners within the three groups, especially over the role of the state in providing moral leadership and in directing foreign policy.

Traditionalist critics rejected liberalism for two major reasons: first, that it had allegedly corroded Western values and faith through its teachings; and second that it had accelerated unnecessary social changes through government legislation. These social critics urged the government instead to promote virtue in its citizens, to create citizens of good character and above all to restore traditional religious and ethical absolutes. Traditionalists tended to be predominantly elitist and/or racist in their attitudes and ever fearful of the harmful consequences if the masses were left to their own devices. Hence, they stood for a hierarchically ordered society in which traditional institutions such as church and state provided moral and virtuous leadership. They believed that stability was extremely important and change

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[32]George H. Nash, The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945 (New York, 1976), 131.

welcome only if it came gradually, through slow organic growth.[33]

Overall, these intellectuals were moving towards a majoritarian conception of what America should be, an idealized community in which the public interest is more important than individual rights. Typical of the beliefs of traditionalists was Willmoore Kendall, the Yale political scientist, who insisted that all government decisions required the "mandate" of the majority. There were limits, he argued, "upon the degree of diversity a society can stomach and still survive."[34] All societies required an orthodoxy, a consensus, a will to survive that they may rightfully defend against those who fundamentally challenge the very core of what they hold dear.[35]

The *libertarian* critique of liberalism was based not only on moral issues but economic ones as well. Classical economists such as Ludwig von Mises, Friedrick A. Hayek and Milton Friedman believed that the overall American standard of living was suffering from government intervention in the economy. Rather than helping the dispossessed, they argued, the welfare state actually

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[33]See for example, Richard Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, (Chicago, 1948). Robert Nisbet, The Quest for Community, (New York, 1953). Russell Kirk, The Conservative Mind, From Burke to Santayana (Chicago, 1953).

[34]Kendall was especially critical of the natural rights philosophy of classical liberals such as John Locke. Not adhering to the necessity of capitalism, he accepted socialism provided that it had the consent of the overwhelming majority. See Willmoore Kendall in Journal of Politics 8 (August 1946), 427.

[35]Wilmoore Kendall summarized in Nash, Conservative Intellectual, 230. See also Kendall, Conservative Affirmation (Chicago, 1963).

entrenched poverty and unemployment. They believed that government initiatives were inefficient and wasteful, that high taxes were an interference with natural free market investment, and that government-business co-operative ventures destroyed competition and fair trade. Urging a return to laissez-faire principles, libertarians urged the government to abandon the welfare state, high tariffs and state intervention in the market.[36]

Radical libertarians feared government intervention and statism in any form, especially if it meant denying free speech through censorship or intervening in the affairs of other nations. Following along the "natural rights" (i.e. classical liberal) utopianism of such philosophers as Thomas Jefferson, John Locke, Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, these thinkers believed in an open society based on a "free market of ideas," where rational self-interested individuals would be unrestricted in their activities. Thus the only appropriate role of the state was to preserve and protect individual rights and to prevent the use of physical force in social relationships. The liberals' use of government initiatives - through censorship restrictions, requiring individuals to sacrifice unpopular beliefs and conform to strict moral codes; or compulsory military service, which drafted citizens against their will to fight in questionable ventures abroad - were

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[36]See for example, Friedrich A. Hayek, The Road to Serfdom (Chicago, 1944); Ludwig von Mises, Omnipotent Government (New Haven, 1944); Bureaucracy (New Haven, 1944); Milton Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom (Chicago; 1962). Capitalism, to these economists, was an indispensable condition for personal liberty.

threats to American civil liberties.[37]

Anti-communists on the other hand, believed that individual rights had to be sacrificed in order to preserve the security of the state. Alarmed by the spread of international communism, they believed that America was in a titanic struggle with the Soviet Union for world domination. Unlike the libertarians, who were isolationist and anti-imperialist, anti-communists believed that the only hope for a democratic future was through hard-line measures and taking the offensive. The United States should build a strong and powerful state through military expansion, exposing and eliminating any internal threats to the nation's security, and pursue aggressive international foreign policies. Overall, anti-communists scolded both the libertarians, (for naivety) and liberals, (for appeasement). Rather than contain communism, commentators such as James Burnham contended, American policy makers should begin "liberating" countries such as Poland now controlled by the Soviet Union.[38]

Many conservative leaders, such as Frank Meyer and William F. Buckley Jr., advocated the urgent need for consolidation of these disparate beliefs into a coherent critique of liberalism. By

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[37]See for example, Frank Chodorov, Out of Step: the Autobiography of an Individualist (New York, 1962). Murray Rothbard, Man, Economy and State 2 vol (Princeton, 1962). Ayn Rand, Atlas Shrugged (New York, 1957).

[38]See for example, James Burnham, Containment or Liberation? An Inquiry into the Aims of United States Foreign Policy (New York, 1953). Ralph De Toledano, Lament for a Generation (New York, 1960).

creating journals such as the National Review, and political organizations like the Young Americans for Freedom, these "fusionists," as they called themselves, offered a forum for the moderates of each camp to exchange views. Gradually, by the early 1960s a consensus of opinions was beginning to emerge.[39] The coalition was delicately balanced, however, because few on the right were satisfied with all the compromising. Other then sharing a common desire to reverse some trend initiated by twentieth century liberalism, there continued to be no fundamental element uniting all conservatives.

THE AMERICAN LEFT IN THE LATE 1950s.

While various movements on the right were mobilizing for a revived critique of liberalism, those on the left were suffering a marked decline in numbers and energy.[40] Several of the left's most

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[39]The compromise, according to George Nash, centred on three basic positions: economically, the coalition stood for private property, competition, and laissez-faire government practices; politically, the moderates believed that although the power of the state should be highly circumscribed (i.e. decentralized powers, checks and balances, strict interpretation of constitution etc) yet powerful enough to maintain law and order and strongly fight communism abroad and within; finally the government should, through its institutions, openly promote minimum standards with regard to family and community. Nash, The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America, 174-181. See also Himmelstein, To the Right, 1-94.

[40]By "Old Left," I am referring to the various political movements (from the 1930s-50s) that wished to change the existing economic and social order into a more collectivist arrangement. Inspired especially by the writings of Karl Marx, these groups looked to the poor, the oppressed and especially the industrial working classes as the vanguard of a revolutionary movement towards a utopian social equilibrium. See Diggins, The American Left, cited in note 16 above.

brilliant political thinkers from the 1930s, such as Irving Kristol, Sidney Hook and James Burnham, had ultimately rejected Marxism and turned into passionate cold war ideologues. The whole political movement was collapsing to such an extent that by the late 1950s, as Milton Cantor notes, "the entire hereditary left totalled no more than 10,000, fragmented into the complete spectrum of sectarian convictions, and most were aging leaders, veterans of countless internal wars and soon to pass off the stage"[41]

There were several reasons why the *Old Left* had eroded so completely by the end of the 1950s. Overseas events in the Soviet Union, and especially the horrors uncovered during the deStalinization era under the Khrushchev regime convinced many former radicals that democratic freedom and one-party dictatorship were incompatible. Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe, especially in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, further discredited the left, causing it to lose, as John Diggins argues, its "moral authority in the eyes of the younger generation."[42] Cold war tensions at home and especially the McCarthyist purges in the early 1950s were particularly devastating. An anti-communist hysteria in America placed radical groups in a constant fear of "witch hunts" and political repression. For groups like the Communist party, according to Milton Cantor, "survival ...had become the obsessive

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[41]Milton Cantor, The Divided Left: American Radicalism, 1900-1975 (New York, 1978), 180.

[42]Diggins, American Left, 151.

concern."[43]

But perhaps the biggest obstacle facing the Old Left was internal divisiveness and the warring between the various political factions. Much like their political adversaries on the right, the Old Left suffered because it lacked a common agenda to unite all its disparate factions together. There was no sense of cohesiveness, the various groups on the left competed rather than co-operated with each other. Those within the Old Left bonded together only in their mutual distaste for liberalism and in their desire for change.

There were some within the Old Left remaining pro-Soviet in their political orientation. Members of the *Communist Party* (CP) continued to parallel both their program and outlook with the Soviet Union. Described by Milton Cantor as "elderly romantics who fed upon memories of the Golden Age which followed the November 17 Bolshevik revolution," American communists after the mid-1950s were forced underground and "reduced to one of a number of powerless radical sects."[44] The communist party was becoming increasingly isolated and alienated, as most other leftist groups wanted to completely dissociate themselves from communism in the Soviet Union, especially Stalinism and totalitarianism.

Both *Trotskyist* and *Socialist sympathizers*, while critical of

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[43]Cantor, Divided Left, 171.

[44]Cantor, Divided Left, 172-180.

the United States, believed that the Soviet system was far worse.[45] They perceived the Soviet Union as an imperialist and oppressive nation, one that did not have the best interests of the working-class at heart.[46] Regarding totalitarianism as the cause of the world crisis, rather than as historian Gabriel Kolko later asserted, as the effect of the collapse of liberalism and welfare politics, the Old Left began enlisting in "the cause of the Free World."[47] Most leftists in the 1950s were in basic agreement with many cold war containment strategies initiated by the United States government. If the revolution was to happen, it was essential that it occurred democratically, by the will of the majority and not by aggression and force.[48]

With each passing year however, leftist analysts grew increasingly disillusioned with the revolutionary potential of American workers. They felt that the workers had been co-opted by consumer capitalism. Uninterested in radical change and more and more willing to compromise and bargain with corporate executives,

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[45]By Trotskyist, I am referring to intellectuals such as Irving Howe who desired an international revolution, believing their could be no such thing as communism in one country. Socialists on the other hand, people such as Michael Harrington and Baynard Rustin, attempted to work within the capitalist system for progressive change.

[46]See for example, Max Schactman, "Is Russia a Worker's State?" The New International, 6 (December, 1940) 195-205.

[47]Gabriel Kolko, "The Decline of American Radicalism in the Twentieth Century," Studies on the Left 6 (September-October 1966), 23.

[48]See for example the writings of Michael Harrington, especially: Towards a Democratic Left: A Critical Program for a New Majority (New York, 1968).

labour leaders frustrated the left with their seemingly apathetic attitudes with regards to the dispossessed. Unable to believe in democratic revolution abroad and radical change at home, veteran leftists, as John Diggins points out, seemingly "could no longer sustain their vital spirit, their will to believe that existing reality can be negated and transformed, that ideals can be realized despite the dark record of historical experience."[49] In order to remain politically "relevant," American radicals found themselves cutting the edge off their criticism and increasingly aligning themselves with progressive liberals within the political system. Rather than protesting the "foundations of American society," the left, as Gabriel Kolko observed, dissected "marginal aspects of American life and politics, that if altered would leave the larger society intact."[50] Overall, the left was in obvious decay, and even the most optimistic observer would have admitted that the movement was rapidly losing its political gravity in American politics.

THE MARGINALIZED INTELLECTUAL CRITICS: ROOTS OF A NEW IDEOLOGY?

While the overwhelming majority of intellectuals who wrote in the 1950s worked within the confines of traditional ideological assumptions, there were some who attempted to develop alternative ways of thinking altogether. Most of these social critics tended

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[49]Diggins, The American Left, 151. See also Kolko, "Decline," 23-4.

[50]Kolko, "Decline," 23-5.

to stand alone because their ideas were far too enigmatic for most political groups to absorb. Marginalized from the intellectual community and shunned by their peers, these political thinkers often remained in obscurity through most of the decade. By the mid 1960s, however their names would become synonymous with the ideas behind the student movement. It was through the writings of these obscure political thinkers, student analysts would later argue, that the roots of the New Left ideology emerged.

The French novelist, essayist, and playwright Albert Camus was one of these thinkers. Camus' writings, such as L'Etranger (1942), La Peste (1947) and La Chute (1956) addressed human alienation in an alien universe, the estrangement of individuals from themselves, the problem of evil, and the pressing finality of death.[51] Always questioning both inwardly and outwardly the meaning and value of life, Camus argued there was no such thing as universal and enduring truths, (classical philosophy) or a hierarchy of values crowned by god. In a world of disunity and absurdity, Camus philosophized: "truth is to be found by a subjective intensity to passion." It must begin through personal experience, through emotion rather than logic. From Camus, American intellectuals were introduced to *existential humanist* thinking, and especially the idea that all action must have a solid moral base.

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[51]see John Cruikshank, Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt (New York, 1959); Lev Braun, Witness of Decline, Albert Camus: Moralist of the Absurd (New York, 1974); Fred Willhoite, Beyond Nihilism: Albert Camus' Contribution to Political Thought (Boston, 1968).

Another social critic who would later become prominent within New Left intellectual circles was Paul Goodman, the anarchist writer and sociologist. Disturbed by the dehumanizing effects of what he called the "rat race of modern life," Goodman argued that Americans should construct an alternative lifestyle in which they would be able to freely explore happiness through their "natural instincts" in a community of mutual aid.[52] This society was only possible if a loose network of decentralized, individualistic communities replaced the present "anti personal," centralized social and political system. Industry would have to become "miniaturized," technology "enlightened" (e.g. banning cars from cities), and government less "gigantic" and more reflective on the will of the local community.[53] These goals would best be accomplished, to Goodman, not through violent revolution, but through the "increased practice of anarchist living." Only by unblocking an increasingly stultifying society would Americans find true therapy to their psychological problems.[54]

A similar perspective could be found in the writings of the German born, United States political philosopher Herbert Marcuse. His major work, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (1955), challenged prevailing liberal assumptions about the

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[52]See Paul Goodman, Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in The Organized Society (New York, 1960).

[53]For a more fully developed explanation of Goodman's utopia, see People are Personal (New York, 1965).

[54]See: interview with Paul Goodman in New York Times Magazine (July 14, 1969).

meaning of freedom. To Marcuse, liberation meant not merely constitutional guarantees of civil liberties, but rather a psychological condition: the "free gratification of man's instinctual needs." Contemporary society, according to Marcuse however, repressed individual creative instinct (eros) for status enhancement. In sacrificing pleasure for social position and material wealth, the traditional "performance ethos" manipulated the masses into a false sense of satisfaction. Only certain groups, those that controlled the means of production, benefitted from such a social arrangement. In effect, Marcuse argued, Americans had become "one-dimensional:" conditioned to accept their incomplete state of existence as the highest possible state of being.[55] It was up to the educated few to enlighten the masses to alternative meanings to life which were more emotionally gratifying.[56]

While Marcuse, Goodman and Camus offered far reaching and devastating critiques of the values predominating within the liberal consensus, they failed to develop a satisfying course of action for their readers to follow. This inspiration would come from C. Wright Mills, the sociologist from Columbia University. A former member of the Old Left, Mills grew sceptical of the relevance of Marxism to the twentieth-century post-capitalist

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[55]Diggins, American Left, 190. See also, Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man: Studies on the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (Boston, 1964).

[56]Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (Boston, 1955).

society. The traditional class paradigm within which the Old Left continued to work, according to Mills, no longer existed, and sociologists needed to develop new theories to better explain present day conditions.

In his major works, The Power Elite (1957) and White Collar (1951) Mills attempted to lead the way towards a new understanding of the class structure. While ideological hegemony continued to exist amongst the ruling elites, according to Mills, the antagonistic relationship between this class and the workers no longer really existed. Labour's leaders framed unions as instruments for integration into the existing political economy, not levers for changing it. They desired "to join with owners and managers in running the corporate enterprise system and influencing decisively the political economy as a whole." The result was a "kind of protocapitalist system from the top," Mills concluded, which actively attempted to preserve social stability.[57]

The new agents for revolutionary change, according to Mills, were those within the traditional middle class. With no "collective strength," the middle classes were facing the "slow expropriation" of their holdings. "More pitiful than tragic," Mills surmised, "white collar" workers were "pushed by forces" beyond their control, "pulled into movements" they did not understand. They were alienated from their craft and subjected to robotic work routines, living a life without values. There was no individual

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[57]C Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York, 1957). See also Mills, "The Labour Leaders and the Power Elite," in A. Kornhauser ed. Roots of Industrial Conflict (New York, 1954), 144-152.

growth at the workplace and thus no job satisfaction.[58] Calling upon the "young intelligentsia" to mobilize these disaffected groups and break through the smokescreen of consensus politics, C. Wright Mills, in effect, predicted what was to happen in the 1960s.[59]

CONCLUSION

C. Wright Mills was among only a few disillusioned scholars even considering revolutionary change possible or desirable at this time. Most intellectuals were far more impressed with Arthur Schlesinger's manifesto of post-war liberalism, The Vital Center (1949). As Schlesinger described it, liberalism was inevitably to prevail as the dominant ideology in the United States. Recognizing the complexities of reality and the narrow possibilities of human endeavour, Americans were gradually coming to a consensus concerning the virtues of pragmatism and compromise.[60] The triumph of John F. Kennedy in the 1960 election reconfirmed liberal analysts' faith in their institutions. With a strong activist in power, there was no obstacle too difficult for the government to handle. What radicalism that still remained would consequently disappear through the 1960s as progressive reforms extinguished any antagonisms still remaining.

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[58]C. Wright Mills, White Collar (New York, 1951), 98.

[59]C. Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left," New Left Review 5 (1960).

[60]Schlesinger Jr., The Vital Center, cited in note 9 above.

Intellectuals in the 1950s simply could not have predicted the emergence of student radicalism in the following decade. So entrenched was the liberal consensus, that even most of its critics were purging many of their more radical ideas to remain politically acceptable. Nevertheless, although there was a great deal of compromising, intellectual circles still managed to develop a number of innovative ideas during this era. The creativity of the 1950s laid the foundations for a new revolutionary ideology in the 1960s.

CHAPTER TWO: THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE OF 1960S RADICALISM THE EARLY WRITINGS

Introduction:

In its early stages (1960-1965), the New Left was neither unpatriotic nor revolutionary. Rather, the movement was largely a reform effort aimed at both strengthening and redefining American founding principles to reflect the realities of contemporary society.[1] Student protesters sought to extend democratic rights and privileges to disadvantaged groups such as the poor, blacks, and the Third World who were traditionally excluded from participating in the political sphere. They argued that America's interventionist foreign policy was wrong and believed that the country should return to an isolationist position allowing each nation self-determination. Finally, they felt frustrated by the restrictive social and political environment in which they lived and wanted to enhance civil liberties to give more control to the individual. In effect, the birth of the New Left originated out of the premise that the ideals established by America's Founding Fathers were not realized in contemporary society. It was the student's role to expose these contradictions and to return the nation to its proper mission.

Early leaders within the movement believed that it was possible to transform America democratically. But to achieve this

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[1] The traditional values I refer to here are primarily Jeffersonian ones (i.e individual rights, democracy, free speech, national self-determination etc.) as declared in the constitution. Student protesters (in the early 1960s) were passionate subscribers to these values and were upset by the hypocrisy separating American ideals from actual conditions.

task, it was necessary to change attitudes and mold opinions to the New Left ideology. Consequently, they initiated programs designed to heighten public awareness of contemporary issues. While strategies such as non-violent resistance drew much needed media attention, what really was required was some definitive written statement of purpose.

Realizing this necessity, members within the movement proceeded in several differing avenues to fill the void. A group of predominantly white male intellectuals on various campuses created several new journals, among them Studies on the Left and Radical America at Wisconsin, and New University Thought at Chicago to provide student radicals a forum to exchange ideas. The underground press network grew rapidly, and newspapers such as The Berkeley Barb became the home to many aspiring radical journalists. Later, several books were written that presented statements of purpose. Jack Newfield's A Prophetic Minority, (1966) and Hal Draper's Berkeley: The New Student Revolt (1965) were personal accounts of the meaning of the movement. Others, including Dennis Cohen and Mitchell Hale's, The New Student Left (1966) and Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau's The New Radicals: A Report with Documents, (1966) offered collections of speeches and essays written by influential New Left spokespeople.[2] These writings, taken together

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[2]Two excellent anthologies of early New Left essays are Mitchell Cohen and Dennis Hale, eds., The New Student Left: An Anthology (Boston, 1966) and Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, eds,. The New Radicals: A Report With Documents (New York, 1966). See also: Thoughts of Young Radicals (New York, 1966) by the editors of the New Republic.

were extremely important in developing early New Left thought. The most influential written material however, came out of the various conventions of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC).

Documents such as The Port Huron Statement (1962), Students and Labour (1962) as well as America and the New Era (1963) were the result of group efforts to establish consensus within the early movement. Created after hours of long debate, these texts summed up the assumptions of the white male radical leaders at the time and sketched alternative visions of American society. Copies were widely distributed, becoming manifestos for the entire movement. Putting special emphasis on the potential of the university as the radical centre for social change, ideas emanating from these sources caught on, persuading many disaffected young that there was hope for the future.[3] Changing the leadership of America became the top priority amongst student radicals.

I

The New Philosophy: Existential Humanism

A major grievance of early writers was their frustration with liberalism and the establishment. Radicals contended that those individuals in powerful positions, especially in government and in

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[3]It seems that those most attracted to these values, at least in the movement's early days, attended the more prestigious private universities and the Ivy League schools. Studies done on the social composition of the early New Left suggest that its members came from predominantly white, upper middle-class professional family backgrounds. There was no great sex-ratio imbalance in the early movement, although the leadership was overwhelmingly male. See Seymour Martin Lipset, Student Politics (New York, 1967).

the universities, were unresponsive to the wishes of the people. Rather than really attempting to solve the problems of the country, liberal politicians, to these writers, based their decision making on political expedience. As Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, editors of The New Radicals, (1966) noted, those in the movement felt modern liberals had "substituted empty rhetoric for significant content, obscured the principles of justice by administrative bureaucracy, (and) sacrificed human values for efficiency."[4] Liberal pluralism, they argued, had developed into a rationale for the tolerance of defective institutions, for inaction, and for the fragmentation of power among public groups and private enterprise.

The student radicals were equally frustrated with the established Left, however, as they were with the liberals. To Jacobs and Landau, the "Old Left" was out of date, "hung up" on old and dead battles, and irrelevant to the problems of contemporary American society. They had been "absorbed into prosperous middle-class America," and were fighting political battles "devoid of any meaning."[5] A new ethically based politics was sorely needed, one with vision and utopian absolutes.

Unlike the Old Left's protest movements of the 1930s, the New

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[4]Jacobs and Landau, New Radicals, p 4. See also: America and the New Era (1962) SDS working paper. The authors proclaim about liberalism: "a style of politics which emphasizes cocktail parties and seminars rather than protest marches, local reform movements and independent bases of power, cannot achieve leverage with respect to an establishment-oriented administration and a fundamentally reactionary congressional oligarchy;" in Massimo Teodori, ed., The New Left: A Documentary History (New York, 1969), 173.

[5]Jacobs and Landau, New Radicals, 42.

Left had no rigid formulas or grand theories to save the country. While the early student leaders were united in their desire for progressive social change, they rejected the older ideological solutions to contemporary problems. "Marx the humanist," wrote Tom Hayden in 1961, "has much to tell us but his conceptual tools are outmoded and his final vision implausible." What was desperately needed, concluded the first president of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), was people of "vision and clarity", who see both the "model society" and the "pitfalls that precede its attainment," and who not destroy their "vision for short run gains but, instead, hold it out for all to see as the furthest dream and perimeter of human possibility."[6]

The New Left, according to Hayden, was to concentrate its efforts on achieving its model society, not on developing untested theoretical concepts. "Radicalism finds no rest in conclusions," he argued, "answers are seen as provisional, to be discarded in the face of new evidence or changed conditions."[7] By joining together on specific isolated issues on which they commonly agreed, Hayden concluded, student radicals would find an ideology "inductively" through group action. The "radical program" was simply the "radical style as it attempts to change the practical life."[8]

What made the New Left unique, according to student analysts

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[6]Tom Hayden "A letter to the New (Young) Left," (1961) in Cohen and Hale eds. New Student Left, 2-8.

[7]Hayden, "A Letter," 2-3.

[8]Tom Hayden, "Letter to the New Left," in Cohen and Hale eds. New Student Left, 7

such as Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, was that its members were enlightened by the theories of existential humanism, and thus liberated from the constraints of conventional empirical debate. Considering all previous knowledge and assumptions to have been created by past misguided, biased investigators, the new radical searched for truths through a subjective approach to reality. "Authenticity" was what was chosen in full consciousness through the individual's inner convictions. Inspired with existential humanist idealism, the new radical envisioned political decision-making based not on scientific rationality but on reason, on the humanistic ideals of justice and truth. With ideology irrelevant, the only values that were meaningful were those which would better human conditions overall.[9]

II

From this existential humanist perspective, student commentators such as Jacobs and Landau examined contemporary American society. They were revolted by the "post-war overdeveloped society," with its large bureaucracies in government, corporations, trade unions, and universities. They found modern technology alienating and depersonalizing, arguing that for too long Americans had sacrificed community and human relations for conformity and efficiency. They rejected the materialist ethos of their parents' generation, contending that the "desire to own, to accumulate, to achieve the status and prestige which go with

[9]See Jacobs and Landau, New Radicals, 3-14.

material wealth" were "meaningless goals."[10] But what particularly repulsed radical writers in the movement's early days, was the United States' cold war policy towards the Soviet Union. New Left leaders were not interested in debating the logic behind anti-communist ideology, but rather its effects on American society. Perceiving the consequences as morally intolerable and wrong, students felt obligated to protest on humanitarian grounds.

Perhaps students were first made aware of the essence of anti-communism during the House of Un-American Activities Committee investigation in California during the early 1960s. The federal government at the time was holding a series of hearings in San Francisco against suspected "security risks" in the United States. The hearings had evolved from a simple trial of supposed subversives to an assault on anyone suspected of associating with known communists. Government officials, according to observers, were exploiting the hysteria to drive social undesirables, such as homosexuals, from their jobs.[11]

Students following the proceedings were horrified by the undemocratic nature of the hearings themselves. They perceived the trials as witchhunts, designed not merely to expose traitors, but to further conservative social causes. They grew concerned when they saw certain essential ingredients of a free society, such as the right to free speech and the right to dissent, disintegrating before their eyes and they wondered what kind of poisoning effect

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[10]Jacobs and Landau, New Radicals, 5.

[11]See David Caute, The Great Fear (New York, 1978).

these proceedings would have on intellectual inquiry. An editorialist in the student newspaper, The Daily Californian, spoke for many, considering the hearings, the way they were conducted and their very existence, as an "affront to American concepts of due process and political freedom."[12]

The students simply did not believe that it was necessary to sacrifice civil liberties to preserve democracy. They worried that American society was becoming increasingly intolerant and totalitarian and they felt compelled to protest the growing dominance of the military over formerly civilian decisions. Not subscribing to the "better dead than red" ideology of anti-communist extremists, members of the newly created Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) argued that the country's reasoning had been "blunted by Official ideologies which served to increase consensus and inspire passive acquiescence rather than an active quest for freedom and fraternity."[13] While not pro-Soviet by any means, student intellectuals such as David Horowitz began to refer to themselves as anti-anti-Communist.[14]

Another serious repercussion of America's Cold war policy, according to the students, was the escalation of each country's nuclear war arsenal to such dangerous levels that it threatened the

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[12]The Daily Californian (May 4, 1960); partially reprinted in Jacobs and Landau, New Radicals, 95.

[13]SDS working paper, America and the New Era (1963), partially reprinted in Teodori ed., The New Left, 173.

[14]See David Horowitz, Student (New York, 1962).

continuation of life on the planet. "The presence of the Bomb", said the authors of the Port Huron Statement (1962), "brought awareness that we ourselves and our friends, and millions of abstract "others" we knew more directly because of our common peril might die at any time." This problem, the pamphlet's authors contended, could not be ignored; it was too "immediate and crushing" in its impact, and it demanded that "individuals take the responsibility for encounter and resolution." Members of the New Left agreed with those working in SANE (the Student Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy) that nuclear testing should be stopped and that all nuclear energy production should be banned. The drafters of the Port Huron Statement concluded that, although "with nuclear energy whole cities can easily be powered, ... the dominant nation-states seem more likely to unleash destruction greater than that incurred in all wars of human history."[15]

The catastrophic showdown between east and west was never closer than in the immediate aftermath to the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. While not sympathetic to the motivations of the Soviet Union, New Left leaders such as Dale Johnson primarily blamed the "gross nature" of the American "imperialist

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[15]Students for a Democratic Society, Port Huron Statement, in Teodori ed. The New Left, 163-172. see also Steven V. Roberts, "Something had to be Done," The Nation, March 8, 1962. It is important to note that the anti-nuclear movement was already prominent in its own right far before the New Left became involved. Todd Gitlin, a future leader of the SDS, first became involved in political activism through his involvement in The Student Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) during the 1950s. See Gitlin, The Sixties: Days of Hope, Days of Rage (New York, 1987).

venture" as the cause of the escalating tensions.[16] The Bay of Pigs invasion, Johnson and others asserted, had forced independent Cuba to become defensive and ally itself with the Soviet Union. This pattern was not new according to the contributors of America and the New Era, (1963) but part of the "seemingly irreconcilable conflict between the two blocs" for world control in which "virtually every human value was distorted, all moral standards seemed weirdly irrelevant, and all hopes and aspirations appeared utopian." America was especially to blame, however. According to these commentators, the country's "enormous pent-up demands for consumer goods" as well as its desire "to assert its power and influence in every area" had resulted in numerous conflicts around the world.[17]

Most student radicals were not strictly isolationist and pacifist in their foreign policy at this time. The student peace movement in the early 1960s was the result of applying existential humanist principles to the content of American foreign policy. As Dennis Cohen and Mitchell Hale noted, while "only a few scrupulous intellectuals would protest a CIA overthrow of the colonial government of Angola," the United States' intervention in the Dominican Republic was protested on the basis of a "sympathy with the domestic program of the rebels."[18] The only ethical

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[16]Dale L. Johnson, "On the Ideology of the Campus Revolution," Studies on the Left, 7 1 (1961), 100-1.

[17]Student for a Democratic Society, America and the New Era, reprinted in Teodori ed., The New Left, 172-182.

[18]Cohen and Hale, New Student Left, xiii.

justification for intervening in the affairs of another country as to eliminate immoral foreign dictatorships that were obviously irresponsive to the wishes of their people.[19] As it was often hard to make such subjective moral judgements, most felt a less aggressive United States abroad would be most desirable. World tensions would be eased and peace made more likely.

The most serious repercussion stemming from the cold war, according to student radicals, however, was the enormous resources and human energy required to sustain it. The military requirements for funding and personnel had become so extreme, wrote the authors of SDS document, The Triple Revolution (1963), that other more important priorities were neglected. While the nation prepared for war, the basic needs of thousands of its citizens remained unfulfilled. Poverty was still a fact of life for many in America and blacks continued to be discriminated against, lacking the necessary power to improve themselves. The New Left viewed these conditions as morally repulsive and called into question the basic priorities of their country's leadership. Only through a "curtailment of the arms race" could funds become available for the construction of egalitarian societies at home and abroad.[20]

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[19]Never would Marxist uprisings be considered irresponsive to the wishes of the people. To analysts such Dale L.Johnson, revolutions in the Third World (i.e. Cuba) were mass movements expressing exactly what the people wanted. see for example: Johnson, "On the Ideology of the Campus Revolution" Studies on the Left, II (1962), 1.

[20]Students for a Democratic Society, The Triple Revolution (Ann Arbour, 1963), 12.

III

From the beginning, New Left analysts such as Carl Wittman, Tom Hayden and others perceived the problems of racial oppression and poverty as intertwined. Both Afro-Americans in general and the poor, black and white, were at the bottom of the American socio-economic hierarchical ladder and had no political representation in a society governed by the elite class. The decision-making structure, based largely on paternalistic ideals, was not working and was not responsive to the needs of the oppressed.[21] For the goals of Blacks and the poor to be secured, radicals believed, it would be necessary to purge American politics of hierarchy and elites and to form a political coalition amongst the lower classes.[22]

The rapidly deteriorating conditions of the poor and the growing inequities within the inner cities was a source of great frustration for socially concerned youth. It was inconceivable to student radicals that a society with the capabilities of sending rockets into space could not provide adequate food and housing for all its citizens. According to an SDS report in 1963, seventy million Americans were living below "officially defined minimum

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[21]What both blacks and the poor required more than anything else, student radicals contended, were jobs. New Left analysts believed that automation had created structural unemployment and a shrinking job market; liberal solutions, stressing "equality of opportunity," therefore, were "meaningless." See SDS pamphlet, America and the New Era, in Teodori ed., New Left.

[22]see Carl Wittman, "Students and Economic Action," and Tom Hayden, "An Interracial Movement of the Poor," in Cohen and Hale's The New Student Left, 170-179, 180-219.

standards of decency...with incomes of less than $100.00 a week for families of four."[23] This problem, according to SDS commentators, could never be solved through typical liberal strategies. "Poverty means a lack of jobs and money and control in peoples lives," noted Rennie Davis of the SDS, and welfare state programs do not deal with these problems. Most of the money instead tended to be "spent on fat salaries and new office space," rather than getting into "the pockets that need it."[24] Alternative methods had to be considered.

The idea in the early 1960s was not to overthrow the government by force, but rather to organize enough of the underclasses so that changes could be achieved democratically. Assuming that the exploited knew best how to solve their problems and that the instincts of the underclasses were basically accurate, student leaders pushed for a massive re-organizing at the "grass roots" level. New Left commentators assumed that it was their role to provide organizational and administrative skills to those without power and rights: students would teach the poor and blacks how to achieve representation in government. The strategy of "participatory democracy", of getting people directly involved in the decisions that affected their lives, emerged as one of the key

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[23]SDS report, America and the New Era, 174.

[24]Rennie Davis, "The War on Poverty: Notes on Insurgent Response," in Cohen and Hale eds, New Student Left, 154.

platforms of early New Left philosophy.[25]

New Left leaders targeted ten decaying city centres in the north for relief work. Various projects such as the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), as well as the Chicago Project were initiated by the SDS both to organize the poor in the city slums and build alternative centres of power away from the central authorities.[26] The students were to serve as Richard Flacks of SDS contended, as a "representative body of those forces and groups within the city which can be mobilized for effective political action," they were to become "centres of initiative within their own organizations and institutions." They were to bring about a "new alignment of forces" with "sufficient power" to achieve social change.[27]

Debates began almost immediately on the overall likelihood that these projects would succeed. Todd Gitlin, president of SDS 1963-64, optimistically argued that the poor, by having "less

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[25]Anne Braden "The Southern Freedom Movement in Perspective," Monthly Review (January-April 1965). Bruce Payne, "SNCC: An Overview Two Years Later" in Cohen-Hale. Staughton Lynd, "The New Radicals and Participatory Democracy," Dissent, (Summer, 1965). New Left leaders were not the originators of the idea of "participatory democracy:" they were heavily influenced by the writings of social critic Karl Mannheim from the 1930s-40s. See James Miller, Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago (New York, 1987).

[26]Todd Gitlin, "The Radical Potential of the Poor," International Socialist Journal 24, (1967); R. Rothstein, "ERAP: Evolution of the Organizers" Radical America (March-April 1968); Andrew Kopkind, "Of, By and For the Poor: The New Generation of Student Organizers," New Republic, (June 19, 1965).

[27]Richard Flacks, "Organizing the Unemployed: The Chicago Project," in Cohen and Hale, eds. New Student Left, 132-147.

stake" in the system were "potentially more radical" than anyone else. "People strongly affected by the rottenness of society," Gitlin concluded, were "best capable of exorcising that rot."[28] Carl Wittman, working on an ERAP project in Chester, Pennsylvania, was more cautious: "Democracy does not come easily to people who have never worked with it and who don't believe in it," wrote Wittman, "and when they accept it, they accept it in form only, and not in content." But slowly, he observed "people in the neighbourhood... are rising and displaying their potential."[29] Kimberly Moody, on the other hand, believed that the projects were a waste of time. The poorest sectors of society, Moody pointed out, had very diverse interests, and poverty in itself was not enough to produce a united radical response. To Moody, the New Left should look for allies amongst the middle-class Negroes, the most "pressed by the prevailing structural contradictions of the society at that time," and thus ready for organization.[30]

While ERAP community organization projects had limited success in mobilizing neighbourhoods on local issues, (such as garbage removal, better schools, and traffic lights) the more ambitious reform efforts largely failed to achieve results. As Richard Rothstein, a veteran of several Northeastern ERAP projects would

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[28]Todd Gitlin, "The Battlefields and the War," in Cohen and Hale eds., New Student Left, 121-31.

[29]Carl Wittman, "Students and Economic Action," in Cohen and Hale, New Student Left, 170-180.

[30]Kimberly Moody, "Can the Poor be Organized?" in Cohen and Hale, New Student Left, 147-154.

later observe, relief workers were handicapped by two major problems: powerful opposition within the municipal administrative councils; and the apathy of the dispossessed themselves. The poor were so pessimistic about the possibility for change that they were largely uncooperative with the students' efforts. In Rothstein's opinion, while the New Left had learned some valuable lessons about the structures of local politics, their struggles were largely in vain.[31]

The sense of futility ERAP volunteers felt about their efforts in the northern city slums was not shared by those who travelled south to help organize the poor Blacks. Invited to work on such projects as the Mississippi Freedom campaign and other ventures designed to help increase Black voter power, student leaders were exposed for the first time to the shocking brutality and injustice of segregation.[32] Students felt "obligated to correct" the segregation "system," not only because it disadvantaged Blacks, but also as Charles McDew, one of the early activist leaders argued, "because it blights everything it touches; it stunts the growth of

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[31]Rothstein, "ERAP: Evolution of the Organizers," 1-17. Historian Sara Evans has more recently noted that the numerous women who participated in these projects were much more effective as organizers than the men: see Personal Politics (New York, 1979). While this observation might be true, my own research through the major journals and books written by New Left leaders suggests that the male-dominated leadership did not recognize these successes at the time.

[32]See Sally Belfrage, Freedom Summer (New York, 1965); Staughton Lynd, "The Freedom Schools: Concept and Organization" Freedomways (Spring, 1965). For a work of this period which emphasizes the importance of the civil rights movement in the creation of the New Left see: Howard Zinn, SNCC: The New Abolitionists (Boston, 1964).

a third of the states of this nation; it prevents the realization of the American dream for millions of its citizens; it jeopardizes the good name of America around the world; and it causes the southern white man to lose his soul." McDew, like many other student writers within the New left movement, was especially concerned about publicizing how genuinely committed student protesters were to their cause. Students were "taking the initiative" to destroy the last remnants of "a sick and decadent society." Blacks in the south could be reassured that the New Left would "not be satisfied until every vestige of racial segregation and discrimination are erased from the face of the earth."[33]

Perhaps McDew's desire to express his sincerity came from a sense of insecurity in viewing the civil rights struggle primarily from the outside. By the time white radicals discovered the issue of racism, the Black movement was already salient in its own right with a history stretching back to the civil war era. Led by a number of Black organizations, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and others, the civil rights movement by the 1960s was beginning to achieve successes like never before.[34] While McDew and other student radicals were undoubtedly

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[33]Charles McDew, "Spiritual and Moral Aspects of the Student Nonviolent Struggle in the South" The Activist 1 (1961) (reprinted in Cohen and Hale ed. New Student Left 58-64).

[34]Two important accomplishments of the 1950s Civil Rights movement were the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown vs Board of*

a major help to Black leaders, they were not indispensable to the Black movement.

A major strategy New Left workers brought back with them from their experiences in the civil rights movement was the practice of nonviolent direct action as a potential source of power. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian revolutionary leader, African-Americans had been using this method to protest racism in the southern United States. They had used nonviolence to protest the segregation of buses and restaurants and had applied the strategy to increase public awareness as to their lack of legal rights. Seeing the effectiveness of the practice firsthand, many student leaders began conceiving of its potential use for their own set of grievances.

The power of non-violence lay, as activist Dave Dellinger observed, in its ability to raise a sense of moral guilt among its oppressors. Willing to sacrifice their bodies for the cause of justice, the protesters appealed to reason and decency, and hoped to dislodge deeply ingrained prejudices or fears. Eventually hoping to win support from previously hostile or neutral sections of the populace, the strategy flowed from a sense of the underlying unity of all human beings. "For any lasting gain to take place," Dellinger argued, "the struggle must appeal to the whole man, including his encrusted sense of decency and solidarity, his

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Education, which ended segregation of the public schools and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which resulted in the end of discrimination on buses. See T. R. Brooks, The Walls Come Tumbling Down (New York, 1974).

yearnings to recapture the lost innocence when human beings were persons to be loved, not objects to rule, obey, or exploit."[35] Rather than promoting social change through guerilla warfare or revolution, advocates of nonviolence such as Dellinger contended, the New Left should attempt to develop a sense of "human solidarity" with their opponents.[36]

IV

The strategy of nonviolence was first practised by the New Left in the fall of 1964 at Berkeley, California. The "Free Speech Movement," according to the students, grew out of the civil rights struggle and was touched off when the Berkeley administration clamped down on campus recruiting for off campus civil-rights activities. Student radicals viewed these actions as offensive and degrading, the product of an autocratic elite suppressing the political expression of a powerless majority. For the first time, the New Left saw the university itself as an active enemy which it had to fight. Strikes and sit-ins were organized to protest the administration, and in one disturbance, student radicals surrounded a police car and held the police officer captive overnight.[37]

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[35]Dave Dellinger, "The Future of Non-Violence," (1965); reprinted in Teodori ed., New Left, 236.

[36]In reality, non-violence also showed a clear refusal to tolerate the old rules, an "aggressive" stance which infuriated segregationalists. See Zinn, SNCC (1964).

[37]for more details, see: Hal Draper, Berkeley: The New Student Revolt (New York, 1965); Gerald Rosenfeld, "Generational Revolt and the Free Speech Movement;" Michael Rossman, "Barefoot in a Marshmallow World," both in Jacobs and Landau eds., New Radicals, 208-215.

Although the administration and student representatives were able to resolve these early issues, more radical demands kept emerging to take their place. Students increasingly related the source of their frustrations to the structure of the university itself. Grievances expanded to include such issues as: the quality of education, including the type of subjects taught and their usefulness; the dehumanizing effects of bureaucratic growth on campus; and finally the restrictive nature of the university's rules and regulations. Feeling alienated and irrelevant, radical protesters began to perceive the Free Speech Movement, as Jacobs and Landau observed, as a revolt against the "embodiment of liberalism." The movement became a challenge to the "quality of life," and to the "essence of modern American values."[38] Mario Savio, the major spokesperson of Berkeley students, summed up the radical students' perspective during a famous speech prior to the Sproul Hall sit-in:

> There's a time when the operation of a machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part, you can't even tactically take part. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all.[39]

The university, Savio implied, was to become the arena where the New Left was to wage its war on the liberal consensus.

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[38]Jacobs and Landau, New Radicals, 60-2.

[39]Mario Savio, "An End to History," quoted in Jacobs and Landau eds., New Radicals, 61. For similar perspectives see: Bruce Payne, David Walls and Jerry Berman, "Theodicy of 1984: The Philosophy of Clark Kerr;" and Michael Novak, "God in the Colleges: The Dehumanization of the University," both in Cohen and Hale eds., New Student Left, 231-242, 242-252.

Student radicals gradually started drawing parallels between their own plight and those of the poor and Blacks. As Massimo Teodori, a historian of the early New Left notes, many within the movement increasingly came to understand the university as a "microsmic reproduction of all the characteristics of the society and its power structures."[40] Consequently, the idea of changing the power relationships in the schools grew in popularity. Applying the concept of participatory democracy to the university environment in which most New Leftists found themselves, radicals argued that the SDS should initiate campus wide movements nationwide for greater student power.

The idea that people should have a role in the decisions that affect their lives now included students as well as the poor and Blacks. Student representation on the university administration board, as Carl Davidson of the SDS argued, certainly would be effective at eliminating needless or unwanted regulations. It also could be influential in decisions such as the type of courses offered, and who taught them.[41] Student radicals such as Davidson perceived that the university establishment censored academics to conform to liberal corporatist ideals of society. Americans as a result grew up not challenging the basic foundations of their existence. They simply did not know alternative visions of the future because they had never been taught them. But with student

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[40]Massimo Teodori, New Left, 68.

[41]Carl Davidson, "Student Syndicalism, or University Reform Revisited," New Left Notes, Sept. 9, 1966.

representation on the faculty, this problem could change: now radical professors sympathetic to New Left ideals could be recognized as valuable academics. The universities' research facilities could be mobilized, according to Davidson, to "serve projects established by the poor and the worker, rather than projects established and controlled by the government, management and labour bureaucrats." Students could be exposed to new ideas and refreshing avenues for intellectual inquiry, the dominance of liberal attitudes on campus would end and the New Left would be able to build a "radical consciousness" amongst the young.[42]

V

The idea of "student power" within the universities grew to become extremely important with the escalation of the Vietnam war in 1965. When the daily bombing raids in North Vietnam began, radicals in the New Left almost immediately perceived the situation as a natural outgrowth of an imperialist foreign policy of third world exploitation. Students resented their universities' compliance with the war effort through scientific research and they were angry that recruiting agents were allowed on campus. Radical leaders in the SDS believed that it was necessary to educate their fellow students and the public, to make them enraged at their government and their university, and to get them involved in decision-making.

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[42]Carl Davidson, "The New Radicals and the Multiversity" (1965); see also Mark Kleiman, "High School Reform: Toward a Student Movement;" both articles in Teodori ed, The New Left, 318-335.

A March on Washington was organized in April 17 1965 in which 15,000 protesters participated demanding peace and an end to fighting.[43] At the University of Michigan, the first teach-ins took place in which various faculty members spoke on various aspects of Vietnam. The New left denied that Vietnam was an "aberration," arguing instead that the foreign intervention represented a continuation of a long standing pattern of American expansionary efforts abroad. The Vietnamese people, along with the Cuban nationalists were now seen as fighters for national liberation from foreign capitalist control.[44]

The focus on Vietnam was effective in mobilizing students towards radicalism. It was during this period (1965-68) that many New Left organizations experienced their highest rate of growth. The complexion of the movement, however, was beginning to change. The New Left was recruiting a flood of new members outside of its traditional base of support, the elite private schools. With new people came fresh ideas and new strategies more radical than before. Those that had controlled the New Left for its first six years began tc lose authority as new leadership seized the initiative.

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[43]Jack Smith, "The Demand is Peace," National Guardian (April 24, 1965); see also Paul Potter, "The Incredible War," National Guardian (April 29, 1965).

[44]The Nation, "Teach-In: New Forum for Reason," (May 31, 1965); Carl Oglesby, "Trapped in a System," in Teodori ed. New Left, 182-88.

Conclusion:

When examining the writings of the early movement what becomes obvious to the reader is that the early protesters were reform minded and not revolutionaries at all. Early New Leftists were radical only in the sense that they distrusted liberal compromise and promoted direct action. What is so impressive about these early writings is how optimistic the authors felt about both the future of the movement itself and about the United States as a whole. Analysts believed the movement was working and spurring America onwards towards a better future. The New left was building momentum and more people than ever before were being converted. In just a few short years however, all would change.

Debates emerging out of the Vietnam war resistance movement dominated the attention of student activists for the next several years. With students preoccupied and distracted with ending the war, issues concerning civil rights and poverty were neglected. Many of the delicate networks established in the south and the inner cities by New Left organizers consequently eroded or disappeared entirely. The dream of peaceful democratic change, through nonviolent resistance at the "grass roots" level, became increasingly difficult to revive.

CHAPTER THREE: THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE OF 1960S RADICALISM 1966-1970.

Introduction:

Student radicalism underwent a series of drastic changes both in philosophy and strategy during the last half of the 1960s. As the New Left increased in size, it expanded its vision. The civil rights movement became a struggle for black liberation; anti-poverty campaigns produced opposition to the capitalist system and the welfare state; the peace movement gave rise to an anti-imperialist consciousness. What was once an existential humanist reform movement which rejected ideological solutions to the nation's problems evolved into a revolutionary effort before the decade was over. Strategies such as non-violent resistance and participatory democracy were spurned by SDS leaders in favour of more militant forms of direct action. A new radicalism made its appearance, distinguished by its use of Marxist and Anarchist theories and practices.

It seems almost inconceivable that so much could change in such a short time. Why the New Left abandoned earlier platforms in favour of more radical solutions while at the same time its organizations were vigorously expanding and obviously gaining momentum is a perplexing question. New Left analysts continued to stress the moral necessity for change to justify their actions and argued that their followers consciously chose radicalism because of their disaffection with liberalism's failure to solve contemporary problems. Attitudes concerning the pressing issues that had motivated earlier students to radical action, such as racism,

poverty, war and university reform, remained consistent throughout the decade. But the entire mood of the movement transformed at the end of the 1960s, as student commentators grew increasingly frustrated with the slow process of change.

While students in the later movement struggled to find a consensus on the proper means of achieving ends, new issues arose which also fragmented the New Left into competing groups. Many Black organizations broke off their ties with the white dominated New Left movement to intensify their efforts promoting racial culture and pride. Women abandoned New Left organizations to help create the feminist movement's fight against sexism. Both counter cultural groups as well as extreme leftist political parties also competed with traditional New Left organizations for popularity among the youth. Leaders within the later movement found themselves challenged to develop a coherent strategy or approach that would unite all the disparate factions behind the same cause.

Many began to wonder if the New Left's original leaders had been naive in their understanding of how American society worked. Liberal corporatism was so entrenched in the country's institutions, student leaders such as Harold Jacobs, Bernadine Dohrn and Mark Rudd believed, that to attempt to transform American society democratically was futile. It would take far too long to wait for the New Left's ideas to triumph among the greater part of the masses before initiating the needed reforms. Commentators such as Jacobs began to "recognize action itself as the most effective

instrument for bringing about political change."[1] Indecision over which actions to take emerged as the major obstacle dividing the later movement.

I

The transformation of New Left thought occurred gradually over a period of several years. In the mid 1960s, the movement was still largely a reform effort which worked for changes within the democratic process by attempting to get people more involved in the decisions that affected their lives. New Left commentators believed that alienated groups such as blacks and the poor, if properly mobilized, could be an effective agent for democratic changes in the United States. Concluding that these groups knew best how to solve their own problems, New Left leaders such as Todd Gitlin, Richard Flacks and Carl Wittman perceived of themselves as organizers, helping to align the forces necessary to bring about necessary reforms.[2]

One of the major factors which motivated later New Left analysts to reassess earlier ideals and assumptions was the change in direction within the Civil Rights movement. In 1966, the first sign of a cleavage developed among Black leaders as frustrations over the slow pace of reforms led many younger members of Black organizations to push for more radical forms of direct action. The Student National Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was taken over by a

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[1]Harold Jacobs, Weatherman (New York, 1970), 1.

[2]See Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau eds., The New Radicals: A Report with Documents (New York, 1966).

group led by Stokely Carmichael. The new leadership decided it was not going to tolerate racist intimidation any more and was now prepared to fight back. Accepting violence as a legitimate defensive strategy, the SNCC started dissociating itself from the older established pacifist groups such as Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). A cleavage developed within the Black communities between those that supported King's version of non-violent resistance and those who backed Carmichael's form of direct action.[3]

White student radicals could not avoid responding to the growing black militancy because their own movement was so closely interconnected to civil rights.[4] Hence New Left leaders were left with few alternatives but to choose whether they were to remain associated with King's movement or align themselves with Carmichael's more radical approach. The years of disappointments within the New Left made the SNCC's vision appealing to many within the movement. In May, 1966, the leaders of the national SDS passed a resolution officially endorsing the SNCC's position.[5]

There were problems with this choice because many within the

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[3]Stokely Carmichael "What We Want," New York Review of Books, (September 22 1966). Melvin H. Posey, "Toward a More Meaningful Revolution: Ideology in Transition," in James McEvoy and Abraham Miller ed., Black Power and Student Rebellion (Belmont, 1969), 253-276.

[4]Many within the SDS had worked together with the SNCC and the SCLC on such programs as the Mississippi voting campaign in 1964. See Howard Zinn, SNCC: The New Abolitionists (Boston, 1964).

[5]SDS statement, "Resolution on SNCC," New Left Notes (May 27, 1966).

SNCC were growing weary of their traditional allies within the New Left. Believing that the possibility for progressive change through the legal system was exhausted, Carmichael and other black leaders considered further white support neither likely nor necessary. The major problems now facing American blacks, they contended, were economic, and far more intractable than those in the past. As the required solutions would threaten middle-class whites, blacks could only count on their own people to fight the system in future years.[6]

SNCC leaders resented the paternalistic attitudes many white student radicals brought to their meetings. Without the whites involved realizing it, Carmichael observed, they were making their Black allies feel inferior and humiliated. What Blacks needed more than anything, the SNCC leader argued, was for their community to unite and take charge of its own destiny:

> Only Black people can convey the revolutionary idea - and it is a revolutionary idea - that black people are able to do things themselves. Only they can help create in the community an aroused and continuing black consciousness that will provide the basis for political strength...Black people must come together and do things for themselves. They must achieve self-identity and self-determination in order to have their daily needs met.[7]

Since the SNCC believed they had to promote racial awareness and pride, they decided in May 1966 that it was necessary to "close

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[6]See Durward Long, "Black Protest," in Julian Foster and Durward Long, eds Protest! Student Activism in America (New York, 1970), 459-82. SNCC, "The Basis of Black Power," reprinted in Teodori ed., The New Left, 271-75.

[7]Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, "Black Power Its Needs and Substance," in McEvoy and Miller eds., Black Power, 245.

ranks" and expel all white members, thus making the entire organization Black.

Black power was discouraging to many SDS leaders in the white student left because it made the goal of racial integration virtually impossible to achieve. Many white dissenters felt betrayed by their former collaborators and soundly criticized the change in direction in the civil rights movement. Abby Hoffman, an emerging radical spokesman, in a letter to the Village Voice, referred to the black power people as "ornery ingrates."[8] Other student radicals, however, such as Andrew Kopkind, Harold Jacobs and Irwin Edelman were more sympathetic, perceiving the change in direction as a necessary and inevitable development. To these analysts, the ideals of participatory democracy meant self-determination for Black Americans.[9]

Whatever the New Left leaders said personally or officially about the growing militancy of the SNCC, the changes did create a number of problems. First, what was to be the white radicals' new role in the civil rights movement? Should they watch passively from the sidelines, or should they redirect their energies towards Martin Luther King's largely stalled political movement? Second,

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[8]Abby Hoffman, quoted in Irwin Unger, The Movement: A History of the American New Left, 1959-72 (New York, 1974), 94.

[9]See for example: Harold Jacobs, "SNCC and Black Power" International Socialist Journal 4 (August 1967), 647 -72. Irwin Edelman "White Radicals and Black Liberation, the Necessity of Coalition," Liberation (September, 1968); Andrew Kopkind, "The Future of Black Power," in New Republic (June 7th, 1967).

how could the SDS match the militancy of Black students? Was the New Left to remain basically a reform effort committed to working for democratic change or a more revolutionary movement favouring a radical transformation of society? Third, and most important, on whom was the New Left going to rely for support now that the Black militants had abandoned them? The student radicals knew that by themselves they could not mount enough strength to achieve social change. They believed the workers were not the agency for social change, and they were becoming increasingly aware of how futile it was to attempt to mobilize the poor.[10] Without the support of the black community, many commentators within the movement began to argue that the New Left had to develop alternative strategies and find new groups to organize.[11] While never officially abandoning their original endorsement of Carmichael's SNCC, New Left leaders in the SDS avoided discussing the issue in great detail after 1966.[12]

Gradually, student radicals were coming to the conclusion that

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[10]See Richard Rothstein, "ERAP: Evolution of the Organizers," Radical America 2 2 (1968), 1-17; Ronald Radosh, "The Corporate Ideology of American Labour Leaders from Gompers to Hillman," Studies on the Left 6 (November 1966), 66-87.

[11]See for example: Greg Calbert, "SDS Official Analyses Struggle for Freedom," National Guardian (March 25, 1967).

[12]Because of the lack of studies devoted to the changing social composition of the SDS over the course of the decade, it is impossible to determine how many blacks remained in the white- lead organization after the split with SNCC in 1966. It is worth noting that Massimo Teodori's thorough documentary history on the later New Left contains five articles written by black SNCC supporters on the civil rights movement's change in direction, yet no responses from white activists. New Left (1969). Journals such as New Left Notes and Radical America also avoided discussing the subject.

they simply could not fight others' battles for them and that groups such as the blacks and the poor would be better off helping themselves. Abandoning the idea that the economically oppressed were the major resources upon which to base a radical movement, SDS theorist Greg Calvert, for example, began to argue that "freedom struggles" were "born out of a perception of the contradictions between human potentiality and oppressive actuality."[13] The only group SDS intellectuals believed could still conceivably be organized were the "new working class" of white collar workers that C. Wright Mills suggested were alienated and ready for change. In the summer of 1966, SDS leaders created the Radical Educational project (REP) in order to strike "roots in the professions, among university faculties, in the arts, and in many of the mass organizations, such as churches, unions etc."[14] Considering the professional classes and the young as the two groups most aware of how the "present structure of advanced industrial capitalism" exploits their labour, the SDS redirected its efforts to mobilizing these groups, leaving the SNCC to organize its own neighbourhoods.[15]

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[13]Greg Calvert, "White America: Radical Consciousness and Social Change," (1967) in Teodori ed., New Left, 416-417. See also John and Margaret Rowntree, "Youth as a Class," International Socialist Journal (February 1968).

[14]See New Left Notes (August 24, 1966).

[15]Calvert, "White America," 413-417. Not everyone in the New Left agreed with the new plan. Todd Gitlin, the early SDS leader, was one who was highly critical of the changing focus. See Todd Gitlin: "Thesis for the Radical Movement," Liberation (May-June 1967), 9.

II

Like the emergence of Black power, the prolonging of the Vietnam War also significantly reoriented New Left thought. Anger against the war became so intensive among student radicals that many other earlier issues and ideals began to get crowded out and earlier policies reconsidered. The original leadership of the New Left believed that an active foreign policy was moral so long as it supported "good" regimes. In challenging the United States' role in Vietnam, American student radicals such as Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau were not specifically condemning interventionism as a policy, but rather this particular instance of aggression. The American intervention in Vietnam was unjustifiable because the Vietnamese people supported the Nationalist Viet Cong. Student radicals concluded that Vietnam was part of a larger struggle between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, for international control.[16]

As the war intensified however, student commentators began to reassess both the cold war itself and the history of American foreign policy in general, and one of the major intellectual figures they consulted was the radical American diplomatic historian, William Appleman Williams. Unlike consensus historians, such as Richard Hofstadter, who stressed the isolationist nature of America's traditional foreign policy, Williams argued that overseas activism had a long history, stretching at least from the time of

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[16]For more details, see chapter two.

the invasion of the Philippines and Hawaii in the 1890s.[17] Throughout the twentieth century, Williams contended, United States governments had consistently attempted to impose their will abroad, forcing the nations of the world to conform to the American vision of an international order. This vision was rather narrow, depending on Third World countries maintaining an "open door" economic policy with respect to the Western financial and industrial powers.

Williams suggested that the primary purpose of American foreign policy was to defend major corporate interests abroad. With the American western frontier closed, American economic expansion depended upon finding alternative opportunities in the Third World. Desiring to define and control this overseas market, American policy makers actively attempted to repress any revolution that did not conform to the ideal and threatened to create alternative futures. In effect, Williams argued, the United States was responsible for the cold war: American policy towards the Soviet Union, China, and now Vietnam, was not pragmatic, flexible and compromising, as liberal analysts suggested but based on

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[17]Hofstadter, among others in the consensus school, argued that America was for the most part, uninterested in foreign affairs, especially in the inter-war years. American intervention in the affairs of other nations were unusual quirks of fate, they were not part of the American liberal tradition. It was the bombing of Pearl Harbour that finally convinced Americans that this kind of policy was not practical in the modern age. See Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition (New York, 1948).

ideological rigidity.[18]

While Williams' revisionist approach to American foreign policy gave students a fresh ideological perspective on why the United States was in Vietnam, the writings of Franz Fanon, the psychoanalyst and leader in the Algerian Liberation movement, dramatically conveyed a sense of the human consequences of imperialism. Fanon wrote several books on behalf of the national liberation of colonial peoples. In For the African Revolution (1961), and The Wretched of the Earth (1965) the social philosopher devastatingly exposed the psychic traumas and social disruption of modern colonialism and alien rule. He defined colonialism as a pervasive structure of oppression which served the interests of big business, and he portrayed the West as an exploiter of Third World land and resources.[19] The only solution to the problems of underdeveloped countries, Fanon came to conclude, was through armed intervention. He urged colonial people to purge themselves of their degradation in a "collective catharsis" to be achieved by violence against their foreign oppressors.[20]

Student radicals generally agreed with Fanon's views and could no longer perceive any American interventionist policy which was morally acceptable. By 1966, SDS leaders such as Carl Oglesby

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[18]William Appleman Williams, American-Russian Relations, 1781-1947 (New York, 1952). See also: Williams, The Contours of American History (Cleveland, 1961). Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy (New York, 1959).

[19]Franz Fanon, For The African Revolution (New York, 1964).

[20]Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York, 1965).

started coming out fully in favour of a victory for the Viet Cong in the war in the Far East. "Cold war anti-communism," Oglesby wrote, was "an ideological mask for Free world imperialism." The war in Vietnam represented a "resistance" to the "long-term expansionary onslaught of the west upon the east" which was "the overarching theme of modern history."[21] The United States government was so corrupt and dominated by corporate interests, Oglesby argued, that all international pursuits should be viewed with suspicion.

According to Oglesby, liberal corporatism relied not only on Third World exploitation, but also on military spending. The American economy depended on "militarized politics" such as Vietnam to "help keep turning the wheels."[22] With the present immoral power structure in place, Oglesby concluded, there could be no possible justification for the use of force. Under Oglesby's leadership the SDS became strictly pacifist, demanding that the United States' government completely disband its military and security forces.[23]

The other major issue that pressed to the forefront over the Vietnam controversy was the government's use of conscription to

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[21]Carl Oglesby, Containment and Change (New York, 1967), 112, 32.

[22]Olgesby, Containment and Change, 116.

[23]Olgesby, Containment and Change, 112. See also: James Finn, Protest: Pacifism and Politics (New York, 1968); David Horowitz, The Free World Colossus: A Critique of American Foreign Policy in The Cold War (New York, 1965); Horowitz, Containment and Revolution; Western Policy Towards Social Revolution, 1917 to Vietnam (London, 1967).

expand the war effort. The draft was extremely unpopular, both to those opposing the war and those who defined conscription as a threat to American civil liberties. Analysts within the New Left realized the importance of these concerns, and yet it was not until 1967 that organizations such as the SDS first began to discuss the issue in earnest. As Oglesby admitted in an article in the New Left journal, Studies on the Left, the SDS was in a very difficult situation regarding the draft issue:

> We understand that our movement has been unable to alter Vietnam's fate. We also understand that to change this requires a serious collision with the force that creates Vietnam's fate. So far we have not been able to frame an exposure of ourselves to American power that also embodies an exposure of American power to us.[24]

By focusing on the draft rather than on the war itself, the SDS leader worried, the intensity of the New Left's efforts to expose American imperialism would be neglected as would the movement's desire to attract sympathy towards the Vietnamese people.

On January 13th, 1967, the SDS passed a resolution printed in New Left Notes which condemned conscription as a "coercive and anti-democratic" practice used by the American government "to oppress people in the United States and around the world."[25] This proclamation was not satisfactory to many followers within the movement because it failed to provide an officially

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[24]Carl Oglesby, "Introduction," to Edward Richer, "Peace Activism in Vietnam," Studies on the Left (January 1966), 55.

[25]Printed in New Left Notes (January 13, 1967). See also Staughton Lynd, "A Time for Compassionate Solidarity," National Guardian (August 6, 1966).

sanctioned program of action.[26] A number of student radicals led by former Stanford University student body president David Harris decided to break away from the SDS to form their own anti-draft organization called the "Resistance." Ignoring instructions from the established New Left organizations, members within the Resistance began destroying or turning in their draft cards in an effort to provoke violent confrontations with authorities and especially the selective service. Only in this bold way, these radicals believed, could Americans be convinced of the sincerity of the anti-war movement.[27] Government officials would be left with but two choices: jailing huge numbers of people or alternatively ending the war.

The emergence of the Resistance was significant to the transformation of the New Left in two ways. First, the leaders of the anti-draft effort devoted their attention almost exclusively to single-issue politics at the exclusion of other concerns. While this manoeuvring might have helped build momentum against the war by attracting greater numbers to the cause, it alienated many of the older members still interested in social concerns such as poverty and racism. Second, and probably more important, the New Left was beginning to take on anarchist-libertarian elements in its

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[26]An entire issue in New Left Notes dealing with the debate over the value of draft resistance left no consensus amongst the contributors. Commentators were divided on the use of illegal tactics to achieve ends. New Left Notes 13 (March 1967).

[27]See for example: David McReynolds, "The Resistance" New Politics (Winter, 1967). Jeffery Gordon, "Notes on the Brooklyn Strike," New Left Notes 13 (March 1967).

philosophy, recognizing individual freedoms as more important than national goals. By instructing their members to go to jail rather than co-operate with the government, Resistance leaders denied the legitimacy of authorities to make legal decisions that were binding to all Americans. For the remainder of the decade, leaders within the New Left would continually try to find the proper balance between libertarian ideals and those which served the needs of a collective movement for change.

III

By the summer of 1967, a new kind of protest movement was forming, especially in the major north-eastern cities and on the West Coast. Members of the "counter cultural" movement argued that feelings of alienation were not strictly political but inextricably related to the constricting morality of the entire American ethical code.[28] Simple participation in political meetings and protest demonstrations was not enough to solve the nation's problems. To critics such as former Harvard psychology professors Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert and novelist Ken Kesey, people were unhappy because their instincts were repressed. The only solution to present day problems was to reject rational discipline and follow your instincts. As bodily pleasure and ecstasy were prerequisites to freedom and happiness, the antiquated rules that governed society, from the protestant work ethic to oppressive drug legislation, to values concerning sexuality, homosexuality and

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[28]See: Berkeley Barb, "From the Haight," (October 26, 1967), reprinted in Teodori, ed. New Left, 362-4.

abortion, to censorship, needed to be removed.[29] The young had to develop an alternative way of life, one that gave individuals more control over their own lives.[30]

Hippies were cultural radicals who had come to conclude that changing the power structure in the United States was both futile and unnecessary. The country was so diseased, these people believed, that it would collapse on its own. The young, therefore, should lead by example by dropping out of the urbanized, industrial society and finding alternative more humane types of living arrangements. The movement "back to the land," wrote Robert Houriet, a former radical editorialist who converted to the hippie lifestyle, was in reality, the "gut reaction of a generation." "Civilization had made a wrong turn," and had lost its "vital unifying vision." Human beings had to "journey back into themselves" and "escape from their own egos," to rediscover "the central consciousness" that had become "lost along the way."[31]

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[29]It is important to note that this perspective on the sexual revolution was primarily male dominated. Women were expected to keep providing the domestic and sexual services while men were going to "enjoy" more "instinctually." For a history of the sexual revolution, see Gay Talese, Thy Neighbour's Wife (New York, 1977).

[30]These ideas did not exist in isolation nor did they originate with members of the counterculture. A psychologist who gave intellectual justification to this philosophy was Norman O. Brown: see Life Against Death (New York, 1959). Certainly the Beat Generation of writers of the 1950s, such as Jack Kerouc and Alan Ginsberg, wrote along the same lines, as did Herbert Marcuse. What made the 1960s movement unique was its actual size and visual nature. For typical counter cultural attitudes see Tom Wolfe, The Electric-Kool Aid Acid Test (New York, 1969).

[31]Robert Houriet, Getting Back Together, (New York, 1971). See especially pages xii, 6, 390-406. Another radical who took the same journey from activism to withdrawal as Houriet was Raymond Mungo.

Moving onto communal farms, hippies such as Houriet began testing various alternative types of family living arrangements, educational practices and religions.

New Left commentators were divided in their responses to the counter culture. Some, such as Charles A. Reich and Theodore Roszak, perceived both the political and cultural protests as interconnected, part of the same negative judgement on the quality of life of modern conditions.[32] The human costs of rapid technological changes, they believed, were becoming increasingly exposed and the youth were reacting to the pressures associated with an uncertain and at times bleak future. The leaders of the New Left should mobilize these people, Reich and Roszak contended, get them involved in the decisions that affected their lives. Only by taking a stand now, they argued, could a new and better society emerge.

On the other hand, there were many within the New Left, such as SDS vice president Carl Davidson, who considered the growing counterculture a threat, unwelcome competition at a most inappropriate time. He acknowledged that the two movements shared many similarities: both were highly distrustful of hierarchy and authorities, anti-capitalist, anti-materialist, and anti-consumerist, and angry about the war in Vietnam. But Davidson

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See Mungo, Famous Long Ago, My Life and Hard Times with the Liberation News Service, (Boston, 1970).

[32]Charles A. Reich, The Greening of America (New York, 1970). Theodore Roszak, The Making of the Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technological Society and its Youthful Opposition (New York, 1969).

considered the counter-cultural movement uninterested in politics. Its members could not be counted on for issues of national concern. What was also disturbing about the counter culture, moreover, was its corrupting effects on members of the New Left itself.[33]

Many members of the New Left, Davidson believed, were attracted to the lifestyles of the counter culture. They enjoyed the casual sexual attitudes of the hippies and were intrigued by psychedelic drugs and music. Davidson was concerned with these trends, fearing that the political movement was becoming lethargic and that its members were losing the discipline and energy needed to continue their agenda for change. In Davidson's opinion, the cultural issues were simply not as pressing as the political concerns. The major consequence of the counter cultural movement was that it was redirecting the thrust for change away from areas where it was needed most.[34]

IV

While the cultural protest undoubtedly had unsettling effects on the political movement, the changing attitudes of women within the New Left was even more distressing to leaders. A new ideology was emerging within women's spheres, rallying around the ideas of feminist critic Betty Friedan. In The Feminine Mystique (1963), Friedan presented a groundbreaking analysis of the malaise of white

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[33]Carl Davidson, "Has the SDS gone to Pot?," New Left Notes (February 1967).

[34] See also: New Left Notes, "Hippies and the Revolution," (November 1967); Henry Anderson, "The Case Against the Drug Culture," Liberation (April 1967).

American middle-class women which contains concrete suggestions for improving their lot. The problem women faced, she argued, was a "feminine mystique," suggesting that there was only one way to be a woman. This narrow definition focused on women's importance in the home, according to Friedan, and was a controlling mythology used by men to keep women in their place as housewife and mother. Until women broke through this "cult of domesticity" outside of their homes, she concluded, they would ultimately be forced into submissive and conforming roles and never gain the equality they rightly deserved.[35] While she addressed primarily the material situation of relatively privileged women, her message of cultural construction touched a wider audience.

Many women in the New Left found Friedan's arguments persuasive, and soon they began to analyze their own situations within the movement. From the earliest days of the SDS, women had largely been excluded from positions of authority within the organization, relegated instead to peripheral, stereotypical "women's roles." By the mid 1960s, frustrations with this chauvinism led female SDS delegates including Jane Adams, Heather Tobis and Francine Silbar to challenge the male leadership and demand equality within the organization.[36] Drawing parallels to

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[35]Betty Friedman, The Feminine Mystique (New York, 1963).

[36]Jane Adams, "People's Power: On Equality For Women," New Left Notes (January 20 1967); Francine Silbar, "Woman and the Draft Movement," New Left Notes (March 27 1967); Heather Tobis, "A Reexamination of the 'We Won't Go' Conference," New Left Notes (January 13 1966). See also Casey Hayden and Mary King, "Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo," Liberation 10 (April 1966), 35-6.

the constricting environment within which they existed and those of other oppressed groups, these women perceived sexism and paternalism as two more institutions the movement should fight against. The New Left organization found itself under attack from within for practices similar to those it criticized in society at large.

The SDS held series of national meetings concerning the "woman question" in June 1967, and yet was unable to develop a consensus to unite radicals of both sexes.[37] Simply not anticipating the spread of feminist ideals, male leaders seemed unable or unwilling to accommodate the new demands of their female members. Much like the Black power movement, many radical women came to believe that they had to break off completely from other New Left groups and organize themselves. Gathering at a convention in Chicago, former SDS activists Naomi Weisstein, Heather Booth, Jane Adams, Jo Freeman and others expressed their new views in a paper addressed to the women of the Left:

> Women must not make the same mistake the blacks did at first of allowing others (whites in their case, men in ours) to define our issues and goals. Only we can and must define the terms of our struggle.[38]

Abandoning the old movement, these women began campaigning for women's liberation within Friedan's National Organization for Women

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[37]See Sara Evans, Personal Politics (New York, 1979), 180-6.

[38]Jo Freeman et al, "Chicago Women Form Liberation Group," New Left Notes (November 13, 1967).

(NOW) and other feminist groups they created themselves.[39] Much like the counter culture, the anti draft movement, and the growing radicalization of blacks, the emergence of women's liberation helped fragment the New Left yet again, further eroding the power of the national SDS.

V

Rather than seriously attempting to deal with these problems, however, New Left leaders decided to channel their energies into other pressing concerns. Perhaps the single most important issue preoccupying the later New Left was the presidential election of 1968. President Johnson's decision not to run for a second term as president caught the leadership of the SDS by surprise, and while they were delighted with the announcement, they could not seem to decide on what to do next. Many of the less radical activists got involved in political organizing, and supported one of the two progressive liberals on the Democratic ticket: Robert Kennedy, the former president's brother, or Eugene McCarthy, the junior senator from Minnesota. Julian Bond, a former SNCC leader, supported McCarthy, finding his strong position against the Vietnam war and his progressive civil rights position attractive.[40] Other radicals, however, perceived the McCarthy campaign as a serious

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[39]See also, Ellen Cantarow et al, "I am Furious (Female)," reprinted in John and Susan Erlich ed. Student Power, Participation and Revolution (New York, 1970). E. H. Altbach ed., From Feminism to Liberation (Cambridge, 1971). Robin Morgan ed., Sisterhood is Powerful (New York, 1970).

[40]See Julian Bond, "The Future of the Democratic Party," The New York Free Press (October 31, 1968); in Teodori ed., New Left, 444-5.

threat to their own movement, representing the most recent example of the liberal establishment co-opting the radical left.

To Carl Oglesby, McCarthy's campaign epitomized "another attempt to emasculate" radicalism in the United States by pragmatic political opportunists.[41] Arguing that "McCarthy in practice" was a corporate liberal and former cold warrior, Oglesby complained about what he perceived was campus defections by former radicals who now saw some hope in liberal reformers. Citing a "failure of nerve" among McCarthy supporters, the SDS leader urged his members to reject the liberal dominated Democratic party and form their own political movement for change.[42] In March 1968, the more radical elements within the New Left and civil rights movements created this political alternative when they established the Peace and Freedom party and nominated Eldridge Cleaver, a black militant leader, as their candidate for president.[43]

It is doubtful whether members of the Peace and Freedom party actually believed their candidate had any hopes for success in the upcoming elections. By this point a number of SDS leaders were no longer believing that progressive changes could be achieved democratically simply by replacing the government's leadership. Taking their inspiration from C. Wright Mills, the deceased

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[41]Carl Oglesby, "An Open Letter to McCarthy Supporters," in Teodori's New Left, 445-50.

[42]Oglesby, "An Open Letter," 448. See also Mike Friedman and Kit Lyons, "McCarthy and the Democratic Party: The Two Party System in Crisis," Independent Socialist (August 1968).

[43]See Unger, Movement, 138.

Columbia University professor of sociology, student commentators such as William Domhoff, Gregory Calvert, Carol Nieman, Barbara and John Ehrenreich and others began arguing that the country was not governed by elected representatives of the people but by a unified "power elite" in positions at the head of key national, economic, political and military institutions.[44] This ruling capitalist and military group, which student radicals derisively labelled the "military-industrial" complex (borrowing the term created by former President Eisenhower), was linked by family, education and class. The elite moved interchangeably among the top positions and had a mutual understanding among themselves to co-operate rather than compete.

The reasons why ordinary citizens felt alienated from their government, Domhoff and the others believed, was because those occupying these key strategic command posts could arbitrarily make self-interested decisions unchecked by institutions or public opinions.[45] No longer believing that participatory democracy and non-violent resistance was enough to overthrow this power structure, these radicals began connecting broad social issues to

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[44]C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite, (New York: 1957). Gregory Calvert, "In White America: Radical Consciousness and Social Change," The National Guardian (March 25 1967); William Domhoff, "How to Commit Revolution" (1968) in Teodori, ed New Left, 451-2; John and Barbara Ehrenreich, "From Resistance to Revolution," Monthly Review (April 1968).

[45]See also Lewis Cole et al. "Fascism, American Style," Guardian (November, 1968).

the economic system itself.[46] To acquire liberation for the exploited groups, the New Left needed to transform the dominant society by rejecting capitalism and all its institutions. The only way to alter the established order, these radicals came to believe, was through revolution.

VI

By March 1968, those that still advocated "organizing" and "base-building" as the cornerstone of the New Left position found themselves under attack by more radical elements within the movement.[47] A more radical group of leaders was emerging, and they advocated that more aggressive actions should be taken to intimidate the authorities into unwanted confrontations. Dotson Rader, one of these later activists, summed up the new strategy in his 1969 book, I Ain't Marching Anymore !:

> (Students should) make each demonstration more violent until the government is forced to pass repressive laws and take general repressive actions which attack the innocent with the guilty. The government will collapse if Americans can be convinced that it can't maintain order except through strong-arm fascist methods. The country's fascism has to be made public through its acts against its citizens.[48]

The New Left would "expose" true "liberalism" through an escalation

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[46]See Gregory Calvert and Carol Nieman, The New Left and the New Capitalism (New York, 1968); Herbert Gintis, "The New Working Class and Strategies for Social Change," in P. Altbach and R. S. Laufer ed. The New Pilgrims (New York, 1972), 101-138. John and Mary Rowntree, "Youth as a Class," Our Generation (Summer, 1968). While earlier radicals no doubt were well aware of these ideas, it was the later movement that really put them into practice.

[47]Mark Rudd, "Notes on Columbia" in John and Susan Erlich eds., Student Power, 100-114.

[48]Dotson Rader, I Ain't Marching Anymore! (New York, 1969), 103.

of violence.

SDS radicals first applied the new strategy on their own campuses. To many students, the university had come to symbolize liberal corporatism and all of its faults: they presumed that the schools were an integral part of the "military industrial complex," and that basic military functions were hidden under the "pretence" of the "national interest." Professors were "tools" for capitalism, and their classes "channelling agents" pushing people into crucial yet oppressive and unwanted jobs. Student commentators especially questioned how funding decisions were made, especially those which in any way tied students to military goals.[49] Thus there could be no liberal establishment more appropriate for the New Left to stage a confrontation than on the campuses themselves. The strategy was "simple," Nick Egleson, SDS president from 1966-1967 argued, radicals would take "a small issue and immediately raise the question of student control."[50] University problems would be exploited to provoke confrontations with authorities in order to raise the revolutionary consciousness of students and observers.

At Columbia University in the fall term of 1968, student radicals and black militants seized two buildings and held them for ransom for several days. They were protesting the university administration's decision to build a gymnasium in Morningside

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[49] See for example: Peter Henig, "On the Manpower Channellers" New Left Notes (January 20, 1967). Todd Gitlin "Resistance and the Movement," New Left Notes (March 20, 1967). Student radicals were most concerned with programs involving nuclear testing and especially those sponsored by Dow Chemical - the makers of napalm.

[50] Nick Egleson, quoted in Unger, Movement, 101.

Heights, a strip of parkland in a poor black neighbourhood near Harlem. While internal political issues - archaic administration procedures, lack of democracy in decision-making, and above all, an immense failure of communication between students, faculty and administration - dominated the early student rhetoric, Mark Rudd, the head of the local SDS, later implied that these concerns were merely a front for much wider goals:

> Each militant in the buildings knew that he was there because of his opposition to racism and imperialism and the capitalist system...we were engaged in a struggle that had implications far beyond the boundaries of the campus in Morningside Heights.[51]

While there was no specific plan to single out Columbia, Rudd noted that the "essence of the matter" was that the student radicals were "out for social and political revolution, nothing less."[52]

By increasing the stakes and refusing to compromise New Left leaders were intent on forcing the government's hand: they would push the administration into making mistakes. With each oppressive manoeuvre on the part of the administration, student radicals were intent on escalating tension and building resistance. Leaders felt that over time, public support would increase and the government would be forced to give up.[53] Soon students at dozens of other

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[51]Rudd, "Notes," 108. To find out more about the local issues that activated students at columbia in the first place see: J. L. Avorn et al. Up Against the Ivy Wall: A History of the Columbia Crisis, (New York, 1968).

[52]See Mark Rudd, "Symbols of the Revolution," in Avorn et al eds., Up Against the Ivy Wall, 290.

[53]See Stanley Aronowitz, "Columbia: Turning Point for Radical Strategy," Guardian (June 1, 1968). Tom Hayden, "Two, Three, Many Columbias" (1968) in Teodori ed. The New Left, 345-6.

campuses duplicated these tactics and universities throughout the United States were under siege by striking students demanding change.[54]

The campus riots initiated by Columbia students were important, not so much for initiating various university reforms, but rather for radicalizing the New Left and convincing its leaders that the more openly confrontational approach was appropriate. Membership in the SDS increased to 100,000 students by the winter of 1968 and there were now 500 local chapters. The New Left was capitalizing on new sources of revenue and its leaders were enjoying unprecedented free publicity.[55] Yet there were some radicals that were still concerned that the movement would have to broaden its base of support beyond university campuses.

One group targeted for assimilation by certain New Left leaders was the cultural protesters who had "dropped out." Two radicals who initiated the move in this direction were Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. Bored with the dullness and conventionality of the SDS, Hoffman and Rubin believed radicals should celebrate life while protesting. Resistance should be fun, attention to New Left causes should be drawn through unorthodox pranks, flamboyance and showmanship and not solemn revolutionary

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[54]See for example: L. F. Eichel et al. The Harvard Strike, (Boston, 1970); W. H. Orrick Jr. Shut it Down! A College in Crisis: San Francisco State College, October 1968-April 1969, (Washington, 1969); Jerry Hoffman, "Princeton: Radical Organizing and the I. D. A. Campaign," in Foster and Long eds., Protest! Student Activism in America, 310-311

[55]Unger, Movement, 115.

dogma. These actions, they contended, would help mobilize the counter culture behind the political movement. They would show Americans how hypocritical and absurd their value system was but would enjoy themselves at the same time.[56]

The two radical leaders together created a new, more loosely organized New Left group: the YIPPIES (or Youth International Party). In a series of often times hilarious pranks, YIPPIE leaders held a seance in front of the Pentagon to exorcise its "evil spirits," threw money from the balconies of the stock market which virtually paralysed business transactions for several minutes and started a paranoia in New York by announcing that they had laced the water supply of the city with LSD. They organized a "Festival of Life" outside the Democratic Convention in Chicago, and urged those who attended to nominate a pig for president. In addition, YIPPIE leaders suggested that their followers not trust anyone "who doesn't get stoned all or most of the time" or "who's never done time."[57]

Overall, the YIPPIE movement was only moderately successful in achieving its aims, and the effort to mobilize the counter culture on political issues met with only partial success. One of the biggest problems facing Rubin and Hoffman was internal resistance from other groups within the New Left movement. Most members of

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[56]See Jerry Rubin: Do it! Scenarios for the Revolution (New York, 1969); Abbie Hoffman (under the alias of Free), Revolution for the Hell of it (New York, 1968).

[57]Jerry Rubin, We Are Everywhere (New York, 1971), 17-23.

the Resistance and the SDS remained highly sceptical of the counter culture as not being serious enough and did not want their movements associated with the playful antics of the YIPPIES. As Tom Hayden later admitted in an interview in Rolling Stone, the SDS national office "fought against the action all the way" when it came to collaborating with Rubin and Hoffman's group.[58] While they would send observers to YIPPIE functions, the SDS would not officially support the idea of an alliance with the counter culture.

At this time many analysts within the New Left were beginning to connect their own set of grievances to the larger international setting. The American student movement was increasingly understood as part of a larger worldwide revolutionary phenomenon of student unrest in all the developed nations. Barbara and John Ehrenreich were but two of many New Left observers who flew overseas to compare their movement with others in Europe and to draw on the ideas of foreign movements for inspiration at home. While they noted "subtle differences both in philosophy and substance" between the various international movements, the basic ideals, they believed were broadly the same and the roots of the troubles similar in all advanced-industrial countries. "The reasons why the universities around the world are producing radicals," the authors contended, had to do with "their functions

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[58]Tom Hayden, quoted in Unger, Movement, 145.

in capitalist societies."[59] All of society's social ills, they argued, from racism, to imperialism, to student boredom, were economic rather than cultural in origin. The universities in particular were designed to train the youth and provide them with skills necessary to help the ruling classes make more money.

Perceiving the student revolts as a worldwide youth revolt against a capitalist created conformist and restrictive working environment, New Left commentators such as Barbara and John Ehrenreich began establishing political contacts with their European allies in hopes of discovering alternative strategies for revolution.[60] Perhaps the single most important consequence of these associations was to further the tendency among New Left intellectuals to orient their ideology towards Marxist-Leninism. Radicals overseas in countries such as Germany, France and Italy were less likely to value democratic and libertarian ideals than their American allies. Furthermore, they considered the American student postulation that the professional classes could be mobilized as false utopian dreaming. White collar workers were to European radicals the essence of the entrenched bourgeois values that had led western societies into the false promised land.[61]

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[59]Barbara and John Ehrenreich, Long March, Short Spring: The Student Uprising at Home and Abroad (New York, 1969), 159-183.

[60]Ehrenreich, Long March, 159-183. See also Michael W. Miles, The Radical Probe: The Logic of the Student Rebellion (New York 1971).

[61]To European students, C. Wright Mills's "new working class" represented a conservative social force engulfed with materialist ethics which resisted change. For attitudes among radicals overseas, the best place to look would be: Tariq Ali ed., The New

European radicals came to the conclusion that it was necessary to bring down the entire system regardless of the wishes of the people.

While earlier writings tended to distance themselves from the Old Left, claiming the New Left's autonomy in terms of organization and distinct ideology, many of the later commentators, including Fred Gordon, SDS internal education secretary, and Mike Klonsky, SDS national secretary, began arguing that the "industrial working class" was still the crucial agency for the revolution.[62] Radical organizations traditionally on the outer fringes of the New Left such as the Marxist-Leninist Progressive Labour party, the Dubois club, and the Maoist May 2nd Movement, gained unprecedented respect and began to infiltrate the SDS and other organizations. Once they were officially members, these groups initiated various resolutions attempting to co-ordinate action projects between labour and student groups.[63]

These efforts were for the most part rejected by members weary of this growing alliance, and yet the Progressive Labour core continued to press on and their influence mounted. Highly

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Revolutionaries: A Handbook of the International Radical Left (New York, 1969).

[62]See for example: Fred Gordon, "Build the Campus Worker-Student Alliance," New Left Notes (September 20, 1969); New Left Notes (June 24, 1968).

[63]See for example, three resolutions put forward during SDS meetings. "Student Labour Action Project" [SLAP] (February 1968); "Towards a Revolutionary Youth Movement," [RYM] (December 1968); and "Revolutionary Youth Movement II" [RYM II] (1969); reprinted in Erlich and Erlich eds. Student Power, 182-88, 189-93.

disciplined, and with a clear agenda, they managed to take over the leadership of the SDS on June 18-22 1969, largely through block voting. This internal haggling between the various factions for control of the New Left ended up alienating many individuals within the movement. Membership within the SDS plummeted after the takeover as students still hostile to organized labour could not accept the new alliance.[64]

With the destruction of the national SDS, there were few alternatives left for discouraged sympathizers to consider. With the central leadership effectively demobilized, it was up to those at the "grass roots" levels to set their own agendas. The majority of former New Leftists remained committed to radical causes and continued to attend various political demonstrations organized at local levels. These activities, however, grew increasingly difficult to stage, the consequence of both a lack of planning as well as government suppression. While major national anti-war demonstrations continued through the early 1970s, the cohesiveness of the earlier movement was no longer there, and this was obvious to all but a few of the most optimistic observers.

Some radicals joined revolutionary groups and began discussing possible scenarios for violently overthrowing the entire government structure. To Harold Jacobs, a radical in the later movement, the reformist orientation and anti-ideological bias of early New Left thought was proving to be "futile in the face of America's

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[64]Unger, Movement, 162-179.

exploitive structure of wealth and power."[65] It was hopeless to work within democratic structures, Dotson Rader agreed, "playing by "democratic rules" was to play in a game where the rules were made by your opponent, a game you could never win."[66] These analysts grew convinced that violent revolution was the last available method for alienated groups to reveal their intense dissatisfaction with the contemporary society. Organizations such as the Weathermen and the Black Panthers became the leaders in openly advocating the need for an armed struggle.

Unlike the Progressive Labour Party, these new radical leftists were not interested in mobilizing the working class but rather in aligning with third world revolutionaries abroad.[67] Rather than Marx, Engels, or Lenin, the Weatherman and the Black Panthers turned to Che Guevera for inspiration. Guevera was a modern revolutionary hero in Argentina whose life story had made him a symbol or martyr for the continuing struggle against imperialism.[68] His major work, Guerilla Warfare, provided radicals with a theoretical "how to" guide for initiating a revolution. Do

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[65]Jacobs, Weatherman, 1.

[66]Rader, I Ain't Marching Anymore!, 12.

[67]See for example: Harold Jacobs ed. Weatherman, (New York: 1970). Bernardine Dohrn et al. "You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows" New Left Notes (June 18, 1969); Huey P. Newton: "An Interview" reprinted in Teodori ed, The New Left, 289-295. While the Black Panthers were primarily interested in a black isolationist program, they actively supported third world revolutionary groups in Africa, Asia and South America.

[68]see for example: Regis Debray, Revolution in the Revolution (New York, 1967).

not wait for the revolution to happen, Guevera argued, rather "create the conditions for change" through what he called "vanguard organizations." It was necessary to catalyze the revolution through terrorist tactics and guerilla warfare.[69]

Both the Black Panthers as well as the Weather underground initiated various bombing campaigns against capitalist institutions, but attempts to co-ordinate efforts on a larger front were ineffective. Black revolutionaries, such as Julius Lester simply did not feel they could count on their white activist allies and continued to work in isolation from whites.[70] Consequently, government authorities were quickly able to infiltrate into these groups, isolate agitators and force them underground. The revolution would not happen in the 1960s, nor would it happen in the next twenty years and beyond.

Conclusion:

The major ideas of the New Left had undergone a dramatic transformation since the writing of the Port Huron Statement in 1962. What was once an existential humanist critique of contemporary society that demanded that its government initiate reforms had evolved into a splintering of revolutionary parties attempting to overthrow the United States government and its major

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[69]Che Guevera, Guerilla Warfare

[70]see for example Julian Lester, Revolutionary Notes (New York, 1969), 44-47, 168-9. On white radicals, Lester quipped "he who stands with you in the revolutionary struggle is the one to be most aware of, because when the deal comes down, he might be in Europe" (47).

economic, political and social institutions. While the overall ideological perspectives of student radicals had changed, New Left commentators throughout the decade consistently stressed that they were motivated by moral or ethical reasons. They had an alternative "vision" of a more just society that they wished to create in the present. By 1970, however, even many members of the New Left themselves were beginning to question both their own motives for becoming radical and the motivations of their friends.[71] A critical self-examination would follow well into the 1970s by disheartened former radicals. These later writings would highly influence the first historians of the New Left movement.

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[71]Dotson Rader was one of the first student writers to suggest that ideas were not the only motivational force behind his turn to radicalism. In his autobiographical assessment of his activist years, Rader suggested an unconscious psychological effect the emergence of militant feminism and the changing sexual dynamics had on both his activism and his turn to violence. Compelled to prove his manhood to his girlfriend, Rader intentionally escalated tensions between himself and the police to provoke fervent confrontations. See I Ain't Marching Anymore 102, 174.

CHAPTER FOUR: ACADEMIC PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT RADICALISM: THE THEORIES OF UNREST

Introduction

While radical student leaders were desperately attempting to communicate the political message behind the movement to whoever would listen, the majority of Americans were coming to understand the meaning of the New Left primarily in structural and psychological terms, believing that radicals were driven by unconscious forces. These themes predominated both in the mass media and in academic circles. With each new demonstration on campus came several studies to explain the new movement and predict its future. While psychiatrists analyzed the radicals' emotional stability, sociologists studied their families, and political scientists examined their organizations and tactics, making analogies between the young dissidents and the radicals of the past.[1] These studies were based almost always on highly subjective, political positions: most clearly defined student unrest as a problem that had to be remedied.

Not since the height of the depression in the 1930s had American society been so openly in turmoil. Consequently, analysts primarily sought to determine responsibility and assign blame. There were, however, no clear precedents, no easy solutions to the social disturbances. Debate on the "youth question" raged on, as psychologist Kenneth Keniston suggested, "with an intensity and heat generally reserved only for the weightiest ideological

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[1]Richard Snow, "The New Left Revisited: A Look at Recent Literature," Journal of American Studies, 19 2 (1985). 239-254.

matters".[2] Opinions polarized as academics defended their positions.

From today's perspective it is clear that the debate over student unrest was so significant to intellectuals primarily because so few thought radicalism would ever re-emerge in the United States. The liberal establishment which controlled the campuses not only failed to anticipate the emergence of the youthful revolt, but it predicted that such a revolt would become progressively less likely with every passing year in the new age. According to these liberal thinkers, western civilization was passing through an era in which utopian idealism and the belief in absolute truths were to give away to pragmatism, efficiency and the end of major political issues.[3]

Thus the growth of the New Left in America represented both a surprise and a challenge to the basic assumptions of these "end of ideology" theorists. By failing to anticipate the growing disaffection of the young, the theories could appear inadequate and misleading. Other views of society could possibly begin seriously challenging the basic assumptions from which liberalism began. Consequently, it is not surprising that the terms of the debate over student unrest seemed to centre on whether or not the movement represented the emergence of ideological politics in the United States and, furthermore, on speculating about the potential

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[2]Kenneth Keniston, Youth and Dissent: The Rise of a New Opposition (New York, 1967), 373.

[3]See for example, Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology (Glencoe, 1960).

consequences of these growing trends.

Liberal theorists set the original boundaries of the debate, and their work on student unrest received most of the attention in the movement's earliest stages. Applying the same methods they had used to understand conservatism in the 1950s, liberal analysts focused their attention, not on the ideas behind the movement, but rather on the people who believed in the ideology. Discovering a high correlation between radical tendencies and certain sociological and psychological variables, a number of researchers began prescribing various solutions to "cure" the "alienated" youth. These studies sought to depoliticize the grievances and the issues which the students argued lay behind their anger.

It later became apparent, however, that liberals were only partially effective in keeping the focus of the debate over student unrest away from political issues. As the New Left expanded in size, both conservative and the Old Left commentators used this opportunity both to expose perceived weaknesses within the "system" and to consolidate their own political movements. What follows is a survey of the various "explanations for student unrest" proposed both by liberal theorists and their critics during the 1960s. It should become obvious to the reader what little attention analysts devoted to the New Left *ideology* itself.

LIBERAL PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Psychological interpretations of student unrest received perhaps the most widespread publicity during the early 1960s.

These investigations generally involved examining assorted personality traits of radical students and comparing them with a control group.[4] The students were most often portrayed in these studies as deviants whose emotional stability, self-control and intellectual capabilities were somehow different from the majority. In suggesting that students who protest were motivated by hidden psychological drives, to satisfy personal, emotional needs, many of these interpretations questioned their subjects' mental stability. By portraying the demonstrators as sick, mixed up, or immature, commentators challenged the validity of the protesters' ideals and suggested that the issues behind student unrest were merely a disguise or rationalization for discontent. In this way, analysts utilized the psychological interpretations of social behaviour, as psychiatrist Seymour L. Halleck recognized, to further political causes or to preserve the status quo."[5] Being conveniently right on the campuses, student radicals provided academics with an easily accessible research group to test various theoretical arguments they were developing.

Many psychologists based their research on explorations of the subjects' families and found the explanation for the present events

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[4]the various studies are well summarized in J. H. Block, Norma Haan, and M. Brewster Smith, "Activism and Apathy in Contemporary Adolescents," in J. F. Adams ed. Understanding Adolescence: Current Developments in Adolescent Psychology (Boston, 1968), 198-231.

[5]Halleck did not say directly which political causes most benefitted by the psychological investigations but did imply that both liberal theorists and their critics were involved. Seymour L Halleck, "Psychiatric Treatment of the Alienated College Student," American Journal of Psychiatry (November 1967), 96.

in early childhood experiences. The family pathology hypothesis suggested that the radical students came from disturbed and disorganized families with unresolved conflicts. Pressures at home, a stressful environment, and confusion of traditional sex roles were just some of the factors listed by psychologists which created feelings of hopelessness and self-pity amongst the alienated youth. The subject, feeling oppressed and on the edge of despair, chose to relieve inner tensions by releasing that negative energy into the wider society. Overall, the students were most often characterized as depressed and suicidal.[6]

Lewis S. Feuer was a social psychologist and philosophy professor at Berkeley in 1964 during the height of the first major student resistance. Becoming somewhat of an authority on the subject, Feuer wrote several articles concerning the origins of student unrest which were later published in a book: The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements (1969). An early advocate of the "end of ideology," Feuer viewed student radicalism primarily as a rebellion against parental authority, a universal generational conflict based on the nature of adolescence.[7] The majority of his studies were comparative analyses of radicalism in the 1960s with movements in other eras

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[6]Halleck, "Psychiatric Treatment," 96-104.

[7]To Feuer, adolescence was a painful stage of life in which the young must give up a part of themselves. A Freudian psychologist, Feuer was particularly preoccupied with the supposed oedipal relationship between father, mother and son. See Lewis S. Feuer, The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements (New York, 1969) 1-12.

throughout history. Feuer argued that youth revolts only occur when the elder generation's authority comes into question, when social and historical circumstances combine to create a crisis or loss of generational confidence. Specific crucial symbolic events, such as a humiliating failure in a war, Feuer argued, caused the young to resent the old and revolt.

Radical students, according to Feuer, were unwilling to face adulthood and were emotionally unstable. As in all generational conflicts, the 1960s rebellion represented to Feuer a mixture of love and hate and ambivalent reaction - full of unconscious emotions which the young could not face. With hidden psychological needs providing the motivational force for these movements, he concluded, youthful protests tended to be largely destructive. The older generation bore the responsibility of taking the initiative to restore confidence in their leadership abilities.

The various "family pathology" theories, however, were not without their critics. Kenneth Keniston, a Yale psychologist, conducted several independent inquiries involving interviews with radical leaders and qualitative judgements about their character, emotions, and attitudes. Consistently he found that radicals came from relatively stable family backgrounds, shared similar values to their parents, were well balanced, healthy, self-accepting, stable and if anything, more highly developed morally than the typical

student.[8] Richard Flacks, a sociologist and former student radical, conducted quantitative surveys and gathered data on the protesting group for such variables as class, religion, sex, parent's occupation, education and political orientation, and type of college attended. He found that protesters generally came from middle-class, affluent, educated and liberal family backgrounds rather than working class or deprived families. They were intelligent, serious students who had excelled in school and had shown leadership abilities in the past. Investigations into parental attitudes revealed that parents tended to support in principle their children's activism.[9] In Flacks's opinion, theories relying exclusively on generational conflict were inadequate as explanations for student unrest.

Other analysts, however, revealed greater levels of tension between radical children and their parents than in other families. Studies conducted by psychologists Jeanne H. Block, Norma Haan and M. Brewster Smith revealed that activists had very low perceptions of their parents and thought of them negatively.[10] Sociologist

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[8]Kenneth Keniston, Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth (New York, 1968).

[9]Richard Flacks "Who Protests: The Social Bases of The Student Movement," in Julian Foster and Durward Long's Protest! Student Activism in America (New York, 1970). For similar findings, see Frederick Soloman and Jacob R. Fishman, "Youth and Peace: A Psychosocial Study of Student Peace Demonstrations in Washington D.C.," Journal of Social Issues, v 20 (October 1964), 61. W. A. Watts, D. N. E. Whittaker, "Free Speech Advocates at Berkeley," Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, II (1966), 53.

[10]Jeanne H. Block, Norma Haan, M. Brewster Smith, "Socialization Correlates of Student Activism," Journal of Social Issues (Fall 1969).

Richard G. Braungart, in comparing the background of the radical students in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) with their conservative counterparts, the Young Americans For Freedom (YAF), noted quite a variation in the students' perceptions of their parents. Conservative students tended to feel closer to their parents and indicated that they could communicate their personal and emotional problems more so than radicals.[11] It was clear to these commentators that other factors in the upbringing of the children were necessary to consider.

Several psychologists began to investigate techniques of child rearing to explain the growth of radicalism. They believed that the students who rebelled came from parents who had experimented with controversial child-rearing techniques developed in the 1930s and 1940s.[12] Critics argued that these permissive parents had bred within their children an insistence on instant gratification, play, and desire before work. By failing to establish proper limits for children in their malleable years, parents had allowed their offspring to grow up without proper respect for authority and lacking in internal controls. Children raised in this lenient environment, these commentators believed, grew up to become self-

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[11]Richard G. Braungart, "SDS AND YAF: Backgrounds of Student Political Activists" (1967), quoted in Seymour Lipset, Student Politics (New York: 1967), 218.

[12]Influenced by the child psychologist Dr. Benjamin Spock as well as Freudian theories of personality development, many post world war II parents and teachers at school abandoned traditional approaches to child-rearing (emphasizing discipline and obedience) in favour of more permissive strategies (designed to stress values such as spontaneity and creativity in the young).

indulgent, undisciplined, impatient and uncompromising young adults. Student radicals were characterized as spoiled and immature adolescents who gave up easily and were unable to cope with the slightest frustration without showing an angry or infantile response.[13]

The team of psychologists including Jeanne H. Block, Norma Haan, and M. Brewster Smith probably did the most exhaustive studies in this area. Conducting surveys on several campuses throughout the country, the Block group tested students' responses to various questions about their upbringing and gathered information on how students perceived the way in which their parents raised them.[14] Like many others before them, these psychologists discovered that radicals were the children of permissive parents. This study, however, emphasized the varying degrees of student rebellion and involvement, acceptance or rejection of traditional values, institutional authority and conformity. On the one hand, "constructive youths," the Block group's label for principled humanitarians concerned about their fellow human beings who were very active in community affairs, supposedly came from permissive parents who encouraged early independence and mature, responsible behaviour in their children

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[13]George F. Kennan, Democracy and the Student Left (Boston, 1968). See also E. E. Sampon, "Student Activism and the Decade of Protest," Journal of Social Issues, 23 3 (1967), 1-33. Charles Hampten Turner, Radical Man (Cambridge, 1970). 364.

[14]Jeanne H. Block, Norma Haan, M. Brewster Smith, "Socialization Correlates of Student Activism," Journal of Social Issues (Fall, 1969).

and de-emphasized competitiveness and conformity. On the other hand, the destructive "dissenters," those who were likely to protest authority, yet were not prepared to serve the community, came from parents who applied inconsistent and often times conflicting child-rearing practices.[15] These "dissenting" youths, the authors indicated, caused most of the problems on campus because they felt alienated and confused. Rather than paying attention to what the radicals were saying, Block et al implied, American leaders should develop strategies to counsel these irrational people through their problems.[16]

This theme predominated throughout the psychological writings of the 1960s on student unrest. Presenting the students as alienated and emotionally disturbed, psychologists offered various suggestions to rehabilitate the nation's youth and prevent the recurrence of such disturbances. In stressing psychological "unconscious forces" as a motivating force for student activism, the effect of these liberal theorists was clearly to shift the focus of the debate over student unrest away from the issues

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[15]While permissive and tolerant in how they disciplined their children, these parents stressed competitive and achievement oriented values as well. According to these psychologists, a liberal approach to child-rearing cannot possibly produce aggressive, ambitious children because these ethics require discipline and restraint.

[16]See also W. A. Watts, D. N. E. Whittaker, "Free Speech Advocates at Berkeley," Journal of Applied Behaviourial Science (1966). 241-62.

themselves.[17] Academics felt challenged by the New Left, and they responded with vigour.

SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Sociologists looked for changes in the social environment to explain youthful unrest. Assuming that humans had no free choices and that their values and sense of reality were socially constructed by unconscious conditioning, researchers tried to provide structural explanations for the growth of the movement. By studying the social background of the radicals, analysts hoped to discover patterns which would determine who was most likely to protest. After determining a number of shared characteristics of the activists - such as family, class, religion, and ethnicity - they then speculated on the relationship between background factors and the situations that would lead to student protest.[18] Using a variety of research methods and statistical variables, hundreds of studies were conducted, each offering explanations which linked student unrest to some aspect of socio-economic trends.

Like they did with the psychological studies, liberal theorists again set the boundaries of the sociological debate over

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[17]I have no evidence on the specific political views of these psychologists but am assuming that their attitudes could not have veered too far from the liberal consensus. When radical psychologists such as conservative Bruno Bettelheim published in mainstream academic journals in the 1960s, readers were most often forewarned by the liberal editorial board.

[18]Jack D. Douglas, Youth in Turmoil: America's Changing Youth Cultures and Student Protest Movements (Chevy Chase, Maryland, 1970), 123.

the student unrest question. Dismissing suggestions that the growth of the New Left was evidence of a rebirth of ideological politics in the United States, they emphasized what they perceived as inherent divisions within the movement itself. "What we have," argued sociologist Chaim Waxman, "is a number of *protest* organizations, protesting various policies and issues, which have just enough in common to combine forces and present a united front."[19] Perceiving the youth movement as historically a counter-revolutionary movement, a reaction against the most basic forces involved in the growth of a new technological society, these same sociologists argued that social unrest was a temporary phenomenon which would disappear as society progressed through a difficult transitionary stage towards the post-industrial era.[20]

"End of ideology" proponents such as Raymond Aron, Daniel Bell, Irving Kristol, and Zbigniew Brezinski believed that the United States in the 1960s was in the midst of a major social transformation from an industrial society into a post-industrial "*technetronic*" society of the future. As in previous transitional periods, these analysts argued, social disturbances were inevitable: transitional mechanisms of social control, older forms of integration between social structure and culture, and previous forms of socialization had ceased to function adequately. The

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[19]Chaim Waxman, End of Ideology Debate (New York, 1967), 5.

[20]See especially, Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Revolution and Counter-Revolution (But not Necessarily about Columbia)," New Republic (June 1, 1968), 25.

student revolts were occurring, Brezinski and Bell argued, because the young were having difficulties adjusting to the rapid change and longed for earlier, simpler lifestyles. Yet however destructive the youth revolt could be in the short term, the theorists concluded, the revolt was historically doomed to failure in the long run. The socio-economic forces were unstoppable, the trends towards the technetronic society and the super-industrial state were beyond human control. In the future, they assumed, as society readjusted and equilibrium was restored, the United States would once again reach a state of relative social equilibrium. In the mean time, they suggested that Americans should wait out the transition as best they could, maintain the basic institutions as repairs proved necessary, and above all, fight to preserve rationality and civil liberties from those who would give them up.[21]

Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote some of the most outspoken articles from this perspective. In his analysis, youth were rebelling because of their awareness that they had no place in the modern world. Reviewing the academic background of the student radicals, Brzezinski noted the disproportionate percentage of liberal arts majors amongst the protesters, compared to a low proportion of commerce and science students. This trend was significant, so he thought, because disciplines such as the humanities and the social sciences were becoming increasingly irrelevant and obsolete in the

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[21]Keniston, Youth and Dissent, 376-8.

new society which required technicians, skilled executives, systems analysts, scientists, and specialists. These students in the "traditional fields" longed for an earlier age and a simpler time where their degrees were more useful. "Reminiscent of the Luddites of early 19th century England," Brezinski argued, student radicals were reacting with "primitive passion, destroying that which they did not understand well enough to harness."[22] Overall, he concluded, students feared the "technetronic age" because of the career uncertainties they would experience in consequence of the rapid and far reaching changes in the occupational structure.[23]

Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol both argued that the growth of radicalism in society in the 1960s was made possible by the emergence of an "affluent society." The process of technological innovations and high productivity had produced momentous changes in society. There were many new consumer goods on the market, jobs were plentiful, and the youth of the 1960s had unprecedented freedom and time. The major consequence of these trends, it seemed to these analysts, was that the young were having difficulties finding useful goals for themselves. With a lack of structure, purpose and meaning in their lives, anxiety was breeding. According to Irving Kristol in 1965:

> ...(The students) are bored. They see their lives neatly before them; they see themselves moving ahead sedately and

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[22]Zbigniew Brezinski, Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technetronic Era (New York, 1970), 108.

[23]See also Samuel Lubell, "That Generation Gap", in Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol ed. Confrontation: The Student Rebellion and The Universities (New York, 1969), 58-66.

> more or less inexorably in their professional careers; they know that with a college degree even "failure" in their careers will represent no harsh punishment; they know "it's all laid on"-and they react against this bourgeois utopia their parents so ardently strove for.[24]

Students were creating hardships and inventing struggles, Kristol concluded, to give themselves a sense of self-definition and to relieve their sense of guilt of living in such privileged conditions.

In Bell's analysis, the growing affluence also allowed for discretionary social behaviour to flourish in the new age. Personal experience in the 1960s was becoming more and more important as individuals sought status and identification through cultural taste and alternative lifestyles rather than material wealth. The dominant culture was becoming obsessed with the "avant garde" - with what was innovative and established a new sensibility, agenda, or taste. Increasingly these trends meant glorifying the magical, mystical, romantic, prodigal, and promiscuous and critiquing the rational, intellectual, and bourgeois. In order to achieve cultural and social sophistication, Bell argued, students had to abandon traditional middle-class values. To Bell, much of the turmoil in the 1960s was the result of tension between the dominant society's attempt to achieve autonomy and break from the socio-economic constraints and traditions of the past, and the economic values which allowed for

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[24]Irving Kristol, "What's Bugging the Students," Atlantic Monthly 216 5 (November, 1965).

the culture to exist.[25] The political issues of the age, Bell concluded, were not ideological, economic or class related but *cultural*, between tradition and modernity. The student rebellion represented not only "one of the last, convulsive twitches of a slowly expiring American individualism," but also a "signal of a severe spiritual crisis" amongst an unrealistic youth. American young people must learn to recognize the value of the dominant middle class liberal culture, Bell insinuated, or they will never achieve satisfaction.[26]

Other commentators pointed to the speed and intensity of technological change and to difficulties of humans coping with these new experiences. To some, the impact of new types of media, especially television, were especially effective in altering people's perceptions. This new medium, as Marshall McLuhan argued, created a powerful new method of communicating information, and its impact was substantial. Television was an exposing agent, disseminating information quickly and visually right into American homes. It forced people to take seriously forms of behaviour that might have been dismissed lightly in earlier decades. The young, psychiatrist Seymour Halleck believed, were especially vulnerable: their naivety and inexperience in life led them to be seduced into

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[25]To Bell, these were essentially liberal values: rationality, efficiency, discipline, restraint, order, delayed gratification, pragmatism, emphasis on work and function etc. See Daniel Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism (New York, 1970).

[26]See "Introduction" to Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol eds. Capitalism Today (New York, 1970), 10. See also Graham Blaine, Youth and the Hazards of Affluence (New York, 1966).

dissenting roles, to take seriously the distortions and exaggerations the new media publicized.[27]

While McLuhan and Halleck were examining the impact of new types of technology *on* the social behaviour of specific age groups, others were probing how it affected understanding *between* age groups. Rapid technological changes, argued Margaret Mead, the cultural anthropologist, created sharp discrepancies between the formative experiences of the parental generation and those of the younger generation. The process of modernization created a variety of conditions, such as living under the threat of nuclear annihilation, the declining closeness of the family, and changes in the occupational structure, which intensified the perception and self-perception of youth as a distinct category with its own unique outlook on life. A cultural cleavage developed as parents lost touch with their children: communication between generations became increasingly difficult as parents searched for solutions in an irrelevant past.[28]

Other youth culture theorists looked to the past for continuities and found a long history of this pattern. Intellectual historian Walter Laquer and sociologist S. N. Eisenstadt, for example, discovered that generational solidarity

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[27]This theory is best described by Seymour L. Halleck "Hypotheses of Student Unrest" in Foster and Long eds. Protest! Student Activism, 117-118. See also Herbert Marshall McLuhan. Understanding Media (New York, 1964).

[28]Margaret Mead, Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap (Garden City, New York, 1970).

arose most often in past societies in which the family or kinship group could not ensure or even impeded the young from attaining full social status by its members.[29] As kinship decreased in importance, these commentators argued, other principles of role and group definition were needed to replace it. In these times, the young tended to bind together in solidarity to maintain the group securities of the family. Symbols were needed, they believed, so that the angry youths could set themselves apart in society and from adults in particular: they needed a method of defining themselves through levels of commitment and inclusion. While part of this identification involved appearance, communication, lifestyles and music, by far the most important was the development of passionate principles and sharp value differences from the larger society.

Many intellectuals regarded the efforts on the part of the young to reform American society towards specific youth values primarily as an expression of a particular stage in the life-cycle. The young were generally more committed to movements favouring rapid social change and millenarian hopes than their elders. Although a time of much freedom, alternatives and choice, adolescence was, experts believed, an "ego threatening period" when

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[29]By full social status, Eisenstadt was referring to the various material and social requirements needed to become an independent member of society. S. N. Eisenstadt, "Changing Patterns of Youth Protest in Different Stages of Development of Modern Societies" Youth and Society (December, 1969), 135-48. Donald MacCrae "The Culture of a Generation: Students and Others," in W. Laquer and G. L. Mosse eds., Education and Social Structure in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1967), 7-8. W. Laquer "Reflections on the Youth Movement," Commentary 47 (1969).

the individual (in transition from dependence to adulthood) needed to establish a personal identity and select adult roles.[30] As the generation coming of age during the 1960s matured into adulthood, commentators believed, their need for group identification would decline and their radical political views would be given up.

Seymour Martin Lipset, the Harvard sociologist, perhaps wrote more about American student activism during the 1960s than anyone else. Like the youth culture theorists, Lipset emphasized in his many works the continuities with the past and with other countries. He believed that the 1960s experience was quite common both internationally and historically. Unlike other theorists, however, Lipset did not stress the youthful nature of the unrest but rather the fact that it was students in particular who were revolting. In Lipset's analysis, students and intellectuals traditionally led or inspired revolutionary change. They were generally a liberal or radical force, and it would be more surprising if students were not activist. Criticism of the academic environment was a recurring element in student activism since the American Revolution, and concern with foreign policy questions had been prevalent on campus during the 1930s as well.[31]

To Lipset, students' social situation as a unique group made them ideal for this kind of activity. They historically were the most available social base for innovative forms of cultural

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[30]Eric Erikson, Identity, Youth and Crisis (New York, 1968). G. W. Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality (New York, 1961).

[31]Seymour Martin Lipset, Rebellion in the University (Boston, 1971), 195.

behaviour and aggressive political action. They had fewer commitments or pressure to conform and tended to be the most volatile and most easily mobilizable of all social strata.[32] Lipset thought that college had a liberalizing effect on students. The overwhelming liberal subculture of the American university created a dominant culture on campus that just could not be found elsewhere.[33]

These factors did not mean that the majority of students were in revolt. On the other hand, Lipset's opinion poll surveys on campus revealed that just a tiny minority were participating and that there were heavy divisions within the students themselves.[34] The rebellion was not that significant to him because the high concentration of people in a small area made each demonstration look much larger than it actually was: it only took a small fraction to make a large demonstration. "The historical political situation" Lipset concluded, "gave the more radically disposed students the issues: their social situation gave them the stimulus and the campus situation furnished them with the means to build the

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[32]Lipset, Rebellion, 195.

[33]Lipset attributed the dominance of liberalism in the universities to three major factors: one, the tendency to define intellectualism by opposition to the status quo and to established institutions; two, the fact that the university attracts non materialist, innovative, and creative people as an occupational outlet; and three, that American professors (and intellectuals in general) tended to be well to the left politically of the general population. Seymour Martin Lipset Rebellion, 31. See also Kenneth A. Feldman and Theodore M. Newcomb, The Impact of College on Students (San Francisco, 1969), 9-10.

[34]Seymour Martin Lipset, Students in Revolt (Boston, 1969), xvii.

movement."[35] The revolt on campus during the 1960s, to Lipset, was the result of rapid demographic growth, which increased the percentage of youth on campus, combined with a given set of political events, such as civil rights, Vietnam, and post-Stalinism, which activated a minority. By emphasizing the relatively small size of the radical movement in comparison to the entire student body, Lipset minimized and defused the importance of the SDS.

Like most other liberal theorists who wrote in the late 1960s, Lipset concluded that very little could do be done to eliminate disruptions at the university. If some degree of radicalism was inevitable given present day socio-economic trends, he believed, the leaders of the country's major social, political and economic establishments should begin preparing methods to manage outbursts of this kind. Calling for government established planning committees to organize society's institutions for crises, liberal commentators such as Lipset, abandoned the idea that searching for causes would lead to solutions.[36] They began instead to suggest to their readers that they had better learn to cope with student

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[35]Lipset, Rebellion, 37.

[36]See for example, the contents of The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest (Washington, 1970); William W. Scranton, chair. In the wake of the tragedies at Kent State and Jackson State, the analysts who co-authored this commission, (including Kenneth Keniston, Nathan Glazer, Richard G. Braungart and Seymour Martin Lipset) suggested to President Nixon that his administration should tolerate campus disturbances because there were no solutions. Nixon virtually ignored these "experts'" recommendations, relying instead on the advise of conservative commentators who suggested more hardline measures be taken.

agitation because it was not going to disappear.

SYMPATHETIC INTERPRETATIONS OF STUDENT UNREST

Not all who wrote about the meanings behind student unrest were as negative as the liberal establishment who published in the mainstream academic journals. While some exploited the student protests, as Seymour Halleck observed, to justify their own grievances, many other sympathetic commentators believed that the behaviour of youth represented a healthy and sensible response to the corruption of the modern world.[37] These analyses had in common the fact that they took much of the rhetoric of the students at their word. Authors such as John Seeley, Paul Goodman, and Edgar Friedenberg believed that the younger student population represented hope for the future.

Some commentators argued that the students' sense of grievance in their institution made them more receptive to political action directed against the larger society. Radical students, they believed, were frustrated with their education and were directing their frustrations on the whole system. While some researchers, such as Richard Peterson made connections between the largeness of

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[37]Halleck, "Hypotheses," 111. The point Halleck was trying to make here was that a number of academics used the opportunities provided by the "problem" of student unrest to register a long standing gripe of their own. The commentators assumed the students agreed with their own point of view without necessarily listening to what the students were saying. Some sympathetic analysts were left-leaning liberals who believed that more progressive reforms were necessary, while others included radicals both on the left and right looking for potential allies in their struggle against the dominating consensus.

the institution and the degree of unrest, others such as Joseph W. Scott and Mohammed El-Assal suggested that the changing internal composition on campus, the growing percentage of women, working people, "out of towners" and ethnic groups on campus was the main factor.[38] They agreed that students of the 1960s felt as though they were numbers in an education factory. Solutions proposed by Peterson, Scott and El-Assal included building more schools and hiring more teachers to reflect the demographic trends.

Others pointed to the changing social function of the university from a status confirming institution to an extension of the outside world: the primary route to the best jobs. Sociologist Robert Paul Wolff, among others, argued that the university was becoming an assembly line, or training camp for the young. In the "rat race" of the modern world, students were increasingly worried about their grades and about the relevance of the curriculum. The university, Wolff argued, had to update both its curriculum, its governing rules and its repressive regulations to reflect the new realities.[39]

Sociologists Christopher Jencks and David Riesman believed the

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[38]Joseph W. Scott and Mohammed El- Assal "Multiversity, University Size, University Quality and Student Protest: an Empirical Study" American Sociological Review (October, 1969), 702-10. Richard Peterson, The Scope of Organized Student Protest in 1967-8 (Princeton, 1968). Peterson's study focused on such variables as the size of student body; the level of bureaucracy; the size of lectures; the student-teacher ratio etc. Scott and El-Assal focused mostly on the reactions of the white male students (the traditional student body) to the changing social dynamics.

[39]Robert Paul Wolff, The Ideal Of the University (Boston, 1969).

lack of attention to students and the depreciation of the teaching function was the root of student unrest. The competitive emphasis on research-oriented faculty who published, and the professionalization of the faculty, was to the neglect of the undergraduate students. The basic skills such as reading and writing were not being properly taught, and while there was tremendous favouritism shown to the most talented students, the average youths felt they were being ignored. The only solution, according to Jencks and Riesman, was to bring the teaching function back to the central position it deserved.[40] Paralleling the systemic explanations proposed by Wolff, Peterson, Scott and El-Assal, Jencks and Riesman found the origins of student unrest within the university structure itself.

Other sympathetic psychoanalysts and sociologists, however, argued that identification with parental values motivated student unrest. Believers in the "red diaper thesis" argued that most radicals from the 1960s came from politically radical left-wing families where from an early age on they were exposed to left wing and radical ideals about society. Upon leaving home and entering the real world, they experienced a disjunction between the values and expectations of the nuclear family and those prevailing in society. These students did not accept the necessity of authority, competition, ambition, and self-control precisely because these were not the egalitarian and democratic family values they were

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[40]Christopher Jencks and David Riesman The Academic Revolution (New York, 1968), 236-250. see also Lipset, Rebellion 32.

accustomed to living under. Writers such as Kenneth Keniston and Richard Flacks believed that student activism was actually an attempt on the part of radicals both to live out their parents' ideals, to make the social revolution actually happen, and to recreate their happy, well adjusted and egalitarian backgrounds in the outside world.[41]

There were some commentators who argued that the students' sense of powerlessness and alienation provoked them to rebel. To Jerry Farber, an ex-California State teacher, psychologist John Seeley and Edgar Friedenberg, the radical social scientist, the the youth rebellion was a defensive response against exploitation by their elders.[42] They perceived youth as a discriminated against minority group forced to supply cheap labour for the older generation. Excluded from real economic opportunities, and expected to serve long apprentices at low pay in horrible conditions, youth were "victims" who were slowly becoming aware of

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[41]Keniston, Young Radicals; Richard Flacks, "Who Protests: The Social Bases of the Student Movement," in Foster and Long eds., Protest! Student Activism, 134-157. See New York correspondent J. Anthony Lukas' investigation: Don't Shoot - We Are Your Children! (New York, 1968) 446-452. Lukas' interpretation was slightly different than that of Keniston and Flacks, arguing that the "germ" of New Left values was suppressed in the hypocrisy of the older generation. "They take what have been covert themes in their parent's lives," he argued, "and make them overt" (452).

[42]Edgar Z. Friedenberg, "The Generation Gap," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 382 (March 1969), 32-42. John Seeley, The Americanization of the Unconscious (New York, 1967); Jerry Farber, The Student as Nigger: Essays and Stories (Los Angeles, 1969).

what was happening to them as demands on them escalated.[43]

The university was the primary location where the ideological battle was being fought, these left-wing analysts argued, because it was the institution entrenching the legitimacy and the objectives of those that controlled the means of production. In the post-industrial, competitive society, a university education was becoming compulsory to acquire the necessary skills for finding work. Denying any means of self-expression, the modern university was an agency of the liberal corporatist value system, and studying had become a "form of labour." Thus the student revolts represented to Friedenberg as well as other radicals on the left, a natural reaction against the tension-filled, pressure-to-succeed atmosphere of contemporary society.[44]

The libertarian perspective on the student unrest question was entirely different. Perceiving the American government as practising legalized coercion against its citizens, through repressive legislation and regulations, libertarians believed students were revolting primarily because they felt their rights and freedoms were threatened. Libertarians such as Karl Hess, Jerome Tucille and Murray Rothbard agreed that many of the students' issues and complaints were legitimate: they were especially appalled by the war in Vietnam, perceived as American

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[43]Friedenberg, "Generation Gap," 32. Seeley, Americanization, 398.

[44]See also Mary and John Rowntree, "The Political Economy of Youth," Our Generation (May, 1968), 173; Ernest Mandel, "The New Vanguard," in Tariq Ali ed., The New Revolutionaries (New York, 1969), 47.

imperialism abroad, the idea of a draft, forcing citizens against their wills to fight, and with anti-drug legislation, the attempt to establish a code of ethics to which every citizen must conform. Eliminate these government restrictions on individual freedom, these commentators implied, and student disturbances would disappear.[45]

Critics of the liberal establishment who were sympathetic to the student movement understood the revolts as a negative judgement on the contemporary quality of life. The human costs of liberalism, they argued, were becoming increasingly exposed. Individuals were being separated from the decisions that affected their lives and were forced into conformist and restricting roles. People were struggling for an identity, and for some integrity and many were yearning to return to an earlier and simpler age.[46]

CONSERVATIVE THEORIES OF STUDENT UNREST

Conservative explanations for student unrest shifted from probing the radicals' emotional stability to focusing on problems within the system itself and the perceived contradictions within liberalism. While not necessarily disagreeing with the sociological and psychological explanations of student unrest, conservatives were more likely to allocate blame and suggest that the disturbances were avoidable. Placing the burden of the

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[45]See for example, Jerome Tucille, Radical Libertarianism: A Right-Wing Alternative, (New York, 1970), 97-109. Murray Rothbard, For a New Liberty (New York, 1973), 1-22.

[46]See Kenneth Keniston, The Uncommitted (New York, 1965).

responsibility on liberal administrators in positions of authority, conservative theorists advocated specific actions for change. At no time were student grievances really considered, however: conservatives portrayed student radicals either as communist subversives or alternatively as immature and confused apostles of ideas they simply did not understand.

Traditionalists used the student disturbances to launch an all out attack on liberalism. Commentators such as Will Herberg, Russell Kirk, and Jeffery Hart argued that the social upheavals were related to the "massification of the adversary culture."[47] As Herberg contended in 1969:

> What we are witnessing today...is the final outcome of the social and moral disintegration of the stable, organized, integrated society we think of as characterizing the high Middle Ages in the West, where everyone normally had a place in society, and found no difficulty in defining his identity in terms of his belonging.[48]

Student radicalism was, in the words of Frank Meyer of the National Review, "merely a radical speed up of the glacier-like-erosion" of American standards, initiated by Liberal reformers and secularists.[49] Steeped with relativist and positivist assumptions, the elite of American society, who controlled the courts, the political legislature and the universities, had failed to establish

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[47]By "adversary culture," Herberg and Hart were referring to a group of leftist and liberal writers, ranging from T. S. Eliot to Norman Mailer and D. H. Lawrence who had become popular in the immediate post war years. See Jeffery Hart, "Secession of the Intellectuals," National Review, 22 (December 1, 1970), 1278.

[48]Will Herberg, "The Student Left: Cause and Consequence," National Review, 21 (July 29, 1969), 754.

[49]Frank S. Meyer in National Review, 22 (April 7, 1970), 348.

limits and proper moral guidelines for youth. As a consequence, students seemed unable to distinguish between right and wrong, between freedom and licence, between "rational dialogue and the clash of irrationalities."[50] Stability would return to the campuses only when absolute truths, such as the Bible's teachings, were returned to teaching, and when strictly enforced ethical restrictions were placed on the types of research conducted.

Many traditionalists would find explanations for youthful radicalism within the pages of pornographic literature or hidden in lyrics in rock music. D. A. Noebel wrote several books for Christian Crusade publications, arguing, amongst other things, that the rock band "The Beatles" were hypnotists and that their rhythms incited their listeners towards rebellious behaviour.[51] Other commentators believed that the extensive use of hypnotic drugs were adversely affecting the young, making them easily malleable to the will of charismatic leaders.[52] Tighter censorship restrictions and tougher drug enforcement laws, they suggested, were needed to protect innocent people from getting harmed.

Other traditionalists discovered the roots of the disaffection amongst the young particularly within the campus itself. According

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[50]Gerhart Niemeyer "The Homesickness of The New Left," National Review, 22 (July 28, 1970), 783; cited in Nash, Conservative Intellectual, 300. See also Robert Nisbet, "The Nemesis for Authority," Encounter, 39 (August, 1972), 20.

[51]D. A. Noebel, Communism, Hypnotism and the Beatles (Tulsa, 1965); Noebel, Rhythm, Riots, and Revolution (Tulsa, 1966).

[52]Richard Blum et al., Students and Drugs (San Francisco, 1969); Richard Goldstein, 1 in 7: Drugs on Campus (New York, 1966); Helen Nowlis, Drugs on the College Campus (Garden City, 1969).

to philosopher Russell Kirk, students and their professors were victims of "America's Pelagian heresy":

> ("declaring" that)... all men may be saved through educationism...(that) mere enrolment in a college...will assure a lucrative salary upon graduation, no really hard work, acceptance at the country club, tolerable manners, participation in Middle-brow culture, exemption from military service, and moral equanimity.[53]

Consequently, Kirk argued, the campuses were "flooded" by a "mob" of uninterested and ill-prepared young people. Standards at the institutions dropped, and those students who were "talented" understandably became bored, apathetic and frustrated with their unchallenging and mediocre education. The frustrated students rebelled, Kirk suggested, because the university had failed to capture their "moral imagination." Only a reduction in the size of enrolments through tighter and more vigorous entrance requirements and an entire revision of the curriculum back to the classics would eliminate the lack of discipline on campus. Kirk believed that university education should be specialized for those who were to become society's leaders in the future and that other types of institutions should be developed to accommodate young people with differing interests.[54]

Others believed that unrest was caused by the students'

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[53]Russell Kirk, "Rebellion Against Boredom," in F. Wilhelmsen ed., Seeds of Anarchy: A Study of Campus Revolution (Dallas, 1969) 29.

[54]Russell Kirk, "The University and Revolution: An Insane Conjunction," in G. R. Weaver and J. H. Weaver eds., The University and Revolution (Englewood Cliffs N.J., 1969). See also: James Ridgeway, The Closed Corporation: American Universities in Crisis (New York, 1968).

hostility to the forced integration of the schools. The "myth of homogeneity," Jeffrey Hart wrote in the National Review, was "abstract:" Afro-Americans had no interest in conforming to liberal utopian planning and in abandoning their heritage; and white students felt uncomfortable with the situation as well.[55] The "mixed education" system, said Ernest van den Haag, the New York University sociologist, "impaired" the learning of both groups. The only pragmatic solution to improve education therefore was to separate schooling according to ability, meaning in his analysis, largely according to race, and to encourage black independence and responsibility.[56] Like many on the right, these scholars felt sympathetic to the "black power" movement and especially the idea that blacks should educate, control and administer their own society.[57]

Many traditionalists believed as did Richard M. Weaver, professor of English at the University of Chicago, that America was falling victim to a "systematic attempt to undermine a society's traditions and beliefs through the educational establishment."[58] The university campuses were dominated, he argued, by "close-minded" secular-liberals increasingly "hostile to open debate." The

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[55]Jeffery Hart, "The Negro in the City," National Review, 20 (June 18, 1968), 604.

[56]Ernest van den Haag, "Intelligence or Prejudice?" National Review, 16 (December 1 1964), 1061.

[57]"What Price Integration," National Review, 19 (August 22, 1967), 887-8.

[58]Richard M. Weaver, Visions of Order: The Cultural Crisis of Our Time (Baton Rouge, La., 1964), 114

absence of philosophical and political diversity and the almost complete exclusion of conservative thinkers on university campuses was proof that the young were being "conditioned for political purposes."[59] Traditionalist conservatives believed that it was necessary to expose the folly of present day trends and to re-establish traditional ideas, theories and doctrines amongst the young.

While the traditionalist reaction to student unrest received some attention within media circles, without question the anti-communist perspective caused the most notoriety. Almost immediately, conservative intellectual leaders such as William F. Buckley, James Burnham, Stanton Evans and Jeffery Hart perceived the rebellions in the university as ideological struggles, as an attempt by radicals to "seize power" and to establish revolutionary, totalitarian regimes.[60] Setting themselves against the widespread view insisting that the New Left had nothing to do with the Old Left, Buckley and others provided analogies to what they perceived were similar Marxist uprisings in Latin America and Asian countries.[61] Much like the worldwide pattern, the American universities were being assaulted by clever subversive

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[59]Weaver, Visions, 132. See also S. J. Tonsor, "Faculty Responsibility for the Mess in Higher Education," Intercollegiate Review, 6 (Spring, 1970), 86; Tonsor, "Alienation and Relevance," National Review, 21 (July 1, 1969), 638.

[60]See for example: Jeffery Hart, "The American Campus: Sierra Mastre?" and M. Stanton Evans, "The New Totalitarians" both in F. Wilhelmsen ed. Seeds of Anarchy, 38-51, 76-90.

[61]William F. Buckley Jr., Communism and the New Left: What They're up to Now (Washington, 1969).

propagandists and hard- core radical plotters.

To journalist Alice Widener, there was a psychological and organizational mechanism at work guaranteeing the movement's persistence. A small group of outside agitators, she believed, had penetrated into the social networks at the schools and were intending to mobilize the gullible young through a radical conversion process. Intentionally precipitating confrontations with authorities, the radical leaders set conditions in group situations which would establish a "spiral of commitment and reaction." Followers of the "pied pipers" were forced into defending extreme positions and points of view: as opposition formed, the levels of commitment to the protest increased. Similar to a "religious conversion," the naive youth would encounter others, assimilate their views, become radical, and then convert others. The overall goal of the movement's leaders, Widener argued, was to destroy the university and sabotage the American democratic system by provoking a repressive intervention by the use of initial force.[62] Overall, anti-communists such as Widener urged their readers to recognize that the student protest leaders were political enemies of the state, and that the situation was serious.[63]

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[62]Alice Widener, Student Subversion (New York, 1968).

[63]This argument was also described in The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest (Washington: 1970). See also Stanton Evans "The New Totalitarians."

CONCLUSION:

While conservative theorists were outspoken in their opinions on the reasons why the students revolted, their analyses were mainly confined to such right-wing scholarly journals as the National Review, and Intercollegiate Review. The more liberally inclined journals emphasized the various psychological and sociological theories developed during the 1960s which stressed "unconscious forces" as a motivating force for student activism. These studies were a clear attempt by theorists to redirect the terms of the debate over student unrest away from the ideology of the New Left and the student critique of the liberal consensus. While it is impossible to determine precisely how persuasive these arguments were with the general public, is clear that the liberal establishment felt threatened by the students' actions. Their authority was being challenged and they needed to respond.

Perhaps no intellectuals devoted more effort in the 1960s to discredit the movement than Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Bell, and Lewis Feuer, the main architects of the "end of ideology" thesis. In speculating on why these particular scholars seemed most concerned with explaining why the student rebelled, it is possible that they felt that their intellectual reputations were at stake. The re-emergence of American radicalism was a fundamental challenge to the legitimacy of their scholarly efforts the previous decade. More probable, however, is that they were simply unwilling to accept the idea that liberalism was not the only ideology in the United States. So entrenched was their belief in the "exhaustion

of political ideas in the west," that they seemed especially reluctant to recognize the re-emergence of ideological factionalism in the 1960s. The politics of consensus was crumbling, and its main adherents could not understand why it was happening.

CHAPTER FIVE: PERCEIVED CONSEQUENCES OF STUDENT ACTIVISM

Introduction

By 1971, a number of prominent American intellectuals believed that the potential for revolution no longer existed.[1] With radicalism declining on the campuses and organizations such as SDS and SNCC in disarray, observers assumed that the New Left was dead. Shifting their focus from developing theoretical explanations for the uprisings, academics now turned to assessing what kind of legacy the protesters left behind. Most historians and political scientists who wrote in the early 1970s came to conclude that New Left activism was harmful or as William O'Neil asserted, "wasted passion."[2] Rather than presenting the movement as a progressive force generating positive changes in the United States, evaluators chose to emphasise what they judged were the movement's shortcomings and failures. These first commentaries became the basis for what was to become the most widely accepted interpretation of the decade. This chapter will describe how this image developed by analyzing the writings of historians, political scientists, and student radicals from the late 1960s through the early 1970s.

The perception that the movement was largely ineffective in

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[1]See for example, Seymour Martin Lipset, Rebellion in the University (Boston, 1971), ix.

[2]William O'Neil, Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the 1960s (Chicago, 1971) 303. See also E. E. Ericson Jr., Radicals in the University (Stanford, 1975). Ed Bacciocco Jr., The New Left in America (Stanford, 1974). Peter Clecak, Radical Paradoxes (New York, 1973).

achieving its desired ends stemmed from attitudes first established during the 1960s. Both critics of the New Left and student radical leaders contributed to creating this impression, although each side was motivated by different reasons. Opponents of the New Left such as philosophers Sidney Hook and Allan Bloom tended to disregard the movement's accomplishments in their writings in an effort to stress the negative consequences of the radicals' actions.[3] The radical leaders themselves consciously downplayed their accomplishments to keep revolutionary fervour high.[4] As sociologist Nathan Glazer rightly observed, radical leaders strategically chose to "look for examples of failure" so that they could prove that more radical positions were required.[5] Thus when the movement's organizations collapsed, very little was written which pointed to areas in which the New Left had been successful. There was, however, an extensive literature which linked student radicalism to a variety of problems affecting the university and society at large.

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[3]See for example, Sidney Hook, In Defence of Academic Freedom (New York, 1971). Allan Bloom, "The Democratization of the University," in R. A. Goldwin ed. How Democratic is America? (Gambrice, Ohio, 1969), 109-136.

[4]See for example: Richard Rothstein, "ERAP: Evolution of the Organizers," Radical America 2 2 (1968), 1-17.

[5]Nathan Glazer, Remembering the Answers: Essays on the American Student Revolt (New York, 1970), 286. Another factor which should be taken into consideration is the changing complexion of the movement over time. Later New Left leaders, not involved in the early movement, would not be interested in pointing out examples where the movement had been successful. The agenda was constantly changing, as described in chapters two and three of this paper.

I

Academics were most concerned with how the student movement would affect the university system. At the time of the first major outbreaks at Berkeley, there were great divisions among the faculty members, with many supporting the student grievances against the administration.[6] These polarizations magnified in later years with the escalation of confrontations and riots on the campuses. Professors who had earlier remained neutral were increasingly forced to choose sides. As the movement intensified some of its attacks on the university itself, an overwhelming majority of the intellectual community came out against the radicals.[7] Believing that the central values and functions of the university were at stake, a number of prominent scholars wrote searing attacks on the New Left's role on campus.

To intellectuals such as Talcott Parsons and Seymour Martin Lipset, for example, the New Left jeopardized intellectuals' commitment to society by insisting on fusing politics and education. "There are important reasons why scholars have opposed politicization regardless of their political ideology," Lipset argued, "which derive from the very nature of scholarship...the university cannot accomplish its task if it becomes a center of

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[6]Robert Boruch, Varieties of Faculty Involvement in Campus Unrest (Washington, 1969).

[7]See Philip G. Altbach, "Student Activism and Academic Research: Action and Reaction," in Altbach and Kelley eds., American Students (Lexington, 1973), 8.

political advocacy."[8] According to Lipset, politics and scholarship should not mix because "ideally" a scholar should consider all existing points of view and all available evidence before reaching a conclusion. Scholars must at least try "to separate...values from research as much as possible," he argued, otherwise they risked ignoring "the complexities involved" in subjects. "Progress" depended on "finding analytical laws which hold up regardless of who does the investigation."[9] Parsons agreed, asserting that to "achieve new knowledge," inquiries must be unrestricted, independent, non-politically motivated, and as objective as possible.[10]

Sidney Hook, professor of philosophy at New York University, echoed these sentiments in several books and articles concerning the politicization of the university. Like Lipset and Parsons, Hook believed that the academic system was in great jeopardy:

> The students' belief that the university must become an agency of specific social and political programs and that the techniques of violence and confrontation are legitimate methods of inducing educational change...(will have)... tragic costs.[11]

Hook was more interested however, in the consequences of the student demands on the quality of their education and instruction. "The function of a college education," he wrote, "is not to teach

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[8]Lipset, Rebellion, 202.

[9]Lipset, Rebellion 303-7.

[10]Talcott Parsons, "The Academic System" in Bell and Kristol ed. Confrontation: The Student Rebellion and the Universities (New York, 1969).

[11]Sidney Hook, In Defence, i.

a person 'how to live.' He can live without it. It is to give him perspective - insight into ideas, trends, values and an ability to live within himself."[12] As a result of the student disturbances however, the problem had changed from "what is the best education for modern men and women," which to Hook should be of "perennial concern", to "what must be done to put an end to disruptions."[13] Citing a "failure of nerve" amongst liberal administrators, Hook argued that those in positions of authority should "turn back the onslaughts against academic freedom" by "patiently and persistently exposing the mythologies and discredited ideologies whose slogans and rhetoric they repeat."[14] Only then, Hook concluded, could the university reemerge as "an institution whose primary purpose is the search for meanings; clarification and truth rather than the exercise of political power."[15]

Most academics, however, rarely challenged the relativist arguments raised by the students who asserted that their research methods and approaches to learning were biased in the service of liberal-corporatist causes.[16] Entrenched in their own political

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[12]Hook, Academic Freedom and Academic Anarchy (New York, 1970), xvi.

[13]Hook, Academic Freedom, x.

[14]Hook, Academic Freedom, x-xvii.

[15]Sidney Hook, In Defence, i.

[16]Student radicals believed that the universities were controlled by liberal corporatists who based decisions concerning tenure choices and which research projects to fund on what best furthered the liberal agenda. For more details, see chapter's two and three of this thesis.

convictions and committed to the idea of "rational authority," intellectuals considered it unnecessary to pursue debates with students over issues. The student radicals were not intellectually qualified to pass judgements on their teachers, Daniel Bell asserted, because "opinion is not knowledge,... intellectual qualifications are a condition for judgement, and ...some judgements are more worthwhile than others."[17] In Bell's opinion, it was not worth the effort to reason with the radical students because they were unwilling to participate in civil discourse. In stressing the supposed intellectual ignorance of his New Left critics, Bell and many other scholars undermined the overall legitimacy of the relativity question challenging their objectivity.

Other academics worried about how the student movement might interfere with their freedom to pursue independent inquiries. Nathan Glazer was one who believed the student radical movement represented a grave threat to free speech. Citing numerous examples in which unpopular political figures and lecturers were unable to speak without disruption on campus, Glazer argued that the New Left was making it impossible for others to engage in open discussion: "Anyone who has experienced the concrete situation in American universities knows that the threat to free speech, free teaching, free research, comes from radical white students, from militant

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[17]Daniel Bell, "Introduction" in Bell and Kristol ed. Confrontation: The Student Rebellion and the University (New York, 1969).

black students, and from their faculty defenders."[18] In Glazer's opinion, the New Left was intolerant and reactionary, and seriously jeopardised personal freedoms.[19]

The students were not concerned with free speech or knowledge for its own sake, according to classics philosopher Allan Bloom, but rather with the political usefulness of the education system. In Bloom's analysis, the university was being taken over by radicals interested not in truths or learning but in politically indoctrinating the young. The goal of the student power movement, Bloom believed, was not democracy, nor equality of opportunity, but factual equality of condition. Once they had achieved positions of power on the faculty boards at the university, Bloom warned, the radicals would revise the curriculum to reflect their own ends. Sacrificing "freedom of the mind" for equality of condition, these "totalitarian egalitarians" were going to censor what was taught to conform to rigid standards. Rather than "backing down... giving in to students' demands," Bloom urged university administrators to defend free inquiry from the "value hungry wolves."[20] The maintenance of a liberal, democratic society depended on reversing what damage had been done.

There was a fear among many prominent left wing scholars that

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[18]Nathan Glazer, Remembering the Answers: Essays on the American Student Revolt (New York, 1970), 270-275.

[19]For a similar conclusion see: Arthur Schlesinger Jr. "McCarthyism is Threatening Us Again," Saturday Evening Post (August 13, 1966).

[20]Bloom, "The Democratization of the University," 136.

the mixing of politics and academics would have reactionary rather than progressive consequences. Consequently, even academics sympathetic to the social goals of the student protesters came out in defence of the continued existence of the politically open university. Philosopher Robert Paul Wolff reminded his readers, "it is a bitter pill...to swallow, but (radicals) benefit more than any other segment of the university from the fiction of institutional neutrality."[21] Barrington Moore, the labour organizer, agreed, arguing that "for all the faults and inadequacies, the universities...do constitute a moat behind which it is still possible to examine and indict the destructive trends in society...(thus) to attack it heedlessly is irresponsible and self-defeating."[22] Pacifist Noam Chomsky also favoured the present university structure, "decentralized and loose in its structure of decision making." The demands of the student radicals would lead to a more restricted working environment, the radical linguist believed, "a system of enforceable regulations that may appear democratic on paper but will limit the individual freedom that exists."[23]

Marxist historian Eugene Genovese's reaction to the student power movement was most intense, referring to them as "pseudo-revolutionary middle class totalitarians" who supported demands for

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[21]Robert Paul Wolff, The Ideal of The University (Boston, 1969).

[22]Barrington Moore, "Barrington Moore Asks for Self-Restraint," Harvard Crimson 146 (November 8, 1967).

[23]Noam Chomsky as quoted in Lipset, Rebellion 214.

student control in order to "wedge for a political purge" of the faculties.[24] As a former victim of McCarthyist excesses in the 1950s, Genovese was concerned with the potential for the revival of a renewed counter-revolutionary sentiment in the United States. Fearing for his own personal security as well as those of his radical friends, Genovese urged the students not to provoke the right into taking action. Rather than advancing leftist causes, he believed, the students' actions "may very well help to re-establish the principle of the campus purge and thereby provide a moral and legal basis for a ...tone of renewed repression."[25] While this type of criticism did not directly attack the goals of such organizations as the SDS, it did reinforce the perception that the academic system was not benefitting by the student revolts. Lacking the support of even the most radical intellectuals in their critique of the university's values and functions, students were left virtually alone to justify their campus actions to the public.

By the time the SDS disintegrated in 1970, most intellectuals were beginning to recognize that the university atmosphere had somehow permanently changed and things would never be as they were in the 1950s. This greatly distressed such commentators as Jacques Barzun, who at one time had sympathized with many of students' goals. According to Barzun, the New Left's attacks against the university system had completely eroded the institution's sacred

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[24]Eugene Genovese, "Black Studies, Trouble Ahead," The Atlantic 223 (June, 1969), 38-9.

[25]Genovese, "Black Studies," 39.

values:

> By organizing hatred...by assaulting and imprisoning their teachers, dividing faculties into factions, turning weak heads into cowards and demagogues, ignoring the grave and legitimate causes for reform, advocating the bearing of arms on campus, and preferring "confrontation" to getting their own way, hostile students have ushered in the reactionary university of the future, medieval model.. For it is clear that once the traditions of deference and civility are broken they cannot be knit up again at will[26]

Barzun's assessment of the damage done to higher education was shared by others as well. "The 1960s", wrote conservative sociologist Robert Nisbet, were the "single most critical, crisis ridden decade in the history of American higher education."[27] Instead of progressing, Nisbet and other intellectuals agreed, the quality of academia had deteriorated during the years of student rioting.

II

The other major issue intellectuals discussed at length was the political ramifications of the student actions. While very few political analysts believed the New Left itself stood much chance of achieving power, they were interested in determining which of the established ideologies would most benefit by the changing political climate. There was much disagreement within the intellectual community in their interpretations. Liberal thinkers, at first, simply did not recognize the emergence of student radicalism as an ideological threat. So entrenched was

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[26]Jacques Barzun, "Tomorrow's University - Reactionary," in Sidney Hook ed., In Defence, 129.

[27]Robert Nisbet, "Dismal Decade for the Academy," National Review 22 (December 29, 1970) 1409.

their belief in the permanence of liberalism in the United States, intellectuals like Lipset, Bell and Hofstadter could not conceive real ideological changes ever taking place.

Consequently, the major focus of discussion in liberal political journals such as the New Republic and The Nation centred on explaining why the movement was taking place rather than on speculating about conceivable political consequences of the student actions. Sympathizing with many of the early student grievances, many of these commentators perceived the student radicals as naive "liberals in a hurry," who should be taught the complexities of governing and the need for compromise. It would not be until quite late in the movement's history that liberal intellectuals recognized that their own positions were in jeopardy.

Critics of the liberal consensus, however, were preoccupied in understanding the potential impact of the New Left from the movement's earliest days. While both conservatives and old leftists did believe that liberalism was not permanent and that the potential for change did exist, they were nevertheless caught off guard by the sudden reemergence of radicalism just as much as the liberals were. Both groups tended to perceive the New Left as a threat to their own movements as well as the liberal consensus: conservatives believed the main beneficiaries of student radicalism were left-wing causes, while leftists thought that the New Left was dividing their movement and would prove a hindrance to progressive social change. These interpretations of the political consequences of the students' actions profoundly influenced how researchers

approached the question in later years. Rather than discussing how the New Left might have influenced those in positions of power to adopt progressive social policies, most of the early historians looking back on the decade chose to focus their examination on whether the Old Left or alternatively the conservative movement might have benefitted by the radicals' actions instead.[28]

Campus disturbances were the subject of tremendous discussion in conservative journals, and nearly everyone of significance analyzed the crisis. Pervading these writings was a sense of the utter seriousness of the uprisings and the potential catastrophic consequences of the students' actions. While some saw the New Left as a threat to American civilization, others thought that student radicalism was preventing the United States from rolling back the communist threat in South-East Asia. Almost everyone agreed, however, that left-wing causes were benefiting most by the growing radicalism on campus.

Conservative intellectuals dismissed what they generally regarded as superficial differences between Old and New Left. Instead, they hammered away at an old theme: the fundamental continuity of the Left.[29] Liberals, Leftists and New Leftists,

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[28]These analysts obviously chose to perceive the progressive reforms introduced during the Kennedy-Johnson years as voluntary measures freely chosen by those who held power. More recently, a number of social historians have persuasively contended that change usually initiates at the lower levels of society and that government actions are responses to the people's will. See for example, James Henretta and David Noble, Evolution and Revolution: American Society, 1600-1820 (Lexington, 1987).

[29]See George Nash, The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945 (New York, 1976), 300.

argued Stanton Evans, shared a "vague commitment to collectivism, permissiveness in morals, militant egalitarianism, hostility to patriotic sentiment and strident pacifism."[30] The New Left was no different than the Old left, Gerhart Niemeyer agreed, in seeking "the destruction of the entire social order and the reversal of all values in Western countries."[31] The Left was obviously expanding in the United States, most conservatives believed, and the threat for revolution was increasing with each passing day.

No one author on the right contributed more to this perception than Philip Luce, who wrote two highly publicized exposes on the movement between 1966-7. Luce was a former member of the Progressive Labour Party who had edited one of their journals and helped to organize exchange trips to Cuba.[32] He had become disillusioned with the movement in the summer of 1965 when it became apparent to him that the "individual lives of those members of Progressive Labour, let alone society," meant less than an "abstract communist catechism" as envisioned by the "gurus" of the movement.[33] By forcing their members to conform to rigid standards of discipline in how they lived, dressed and behaved, the PL's leadership had revealed to Luce its disrespect for individual

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[30]M. Stanton Evans, "Orthodox Rebels," National Review 18 (July 12, 1966), 687.

[31]Gerhart Niemeyer, "Homesickness of the New Left," National Review 22 (July 28, 1970), 783.

[32]Philip Luce, The New Left (New York, 1966); Luce, Road to Revolution: Communist Guerilla Warfare in the USA (San Diego, 1967).

[33]Luce, Road to Revolution, 4.

autonomy. No longer perceiving student radicalism as a righteous attempt to make American society a more humane place to live, the former activist defected to the right in order to prevent the dictatorial desires of the movement's leaders. In a devastating denunciation from the inside, he accused the New Left of conspiring to "organize a guerilla warfare operation" in the various ghettos of the urban United States.

Student leaders, according to Luce, were attempting to "ignite riots" in black communities with the hopes of eventually sparking a confrontation between the races.[34] They were capitalizing on existing racial tensions to spread violence and revolutionary fervour among the lower classes. The eventual goal of the New Left, Luce concluded, was nothing less than overthrowing the government by force and establishing a totalitarian regime in the United States. To most conservative commentators, Luce's message was not news but simply more evidence that their perceptions were correct right from the beginning.[35]

A radical component on the right, however, saw in the student protest movement an opportunity for further growth. To radical libertarians such as economist Murray Rothbard and Karl Hess, Barry Goldwater's principal speechwriter in 1964, the conservative movement of the late 1960s was controlled by traditionalists who valued law and order and religious absolutes over individual

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[34]Luce, Road to Revolution, 10-11.

[35]See also William F. Buckley, Communism and the New Left.

liberty, government non-interference and the free market.[36] To these radicals on the right, the mere thought that these forces might take control of society was terrifying. Certainly the threat of totalitarianism from the right was as grave as that from the left. By 1969, many libertarian thinkers had totally broken off their association with conservative organizations and were desperately searching for new members.[37]

These analysts were attracted to the anti-establishment impulses of the radical students. Finding the goals of the New Left almost identical to their own, some such as Jerome Tucille began speculating on the possibility of establishing "an open and working coalition with the New Left" in a "common struggle to resist the abuses of the United States government."[38] The main hope of this group was that the statist, communitarian impulses of the student ideology were mere rhetoric and that many of the members of such student organizations as the SDS were actually motivated by libertarian, (or anarchist) impulses rather than Socialist utopianism.

Most libertarian analysts, however, were far from encouraged by the protesters' actions. To these laissez-faire philosophers,

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[36]See Karl Hess, "The Death of Politics," Playboy (March 1969). Murray Rothbard, "Confessions of a Right-Wing Liberal," Ramparts 6 (June 15, 1968) 47-52.

[37]Jerome Tucille, Radical Libertarianism: A Right Wing Alternative (New York, 1970), 97-109. see also Murray Rothbard, For a New Liberty (New York, 1973), 1-22.

[38]Tucille, Radical Libertarianism, 109.

the student radicals represented their worst fears: another revolutionary group on the left interested in seizing power and forcing their agenda on others. Ayn Rand, author of Atlas Shrugged, and editor of the "Objectivist" newsletter, was one of the most outspoken. In a series of highly critical essays, Rand condemned the New Left for "intellectual bankruptcy," and for "divorcing reason from reality." The student rebels were merely naive "young fools who refused to look beyond the immediate 'now,'" who had "no way of knowing" that they were serving the very interests of the totalitarian system that they supposedly opposed.[39] They were hypocritical as well, demanding greater rights and freedoms for themselves and yet outrageously violating other citizens' rights to private property and free speech. Rand was especially concerned with the methods used by the protesters to achieve their ends, as she revealed in her assessment of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964:

> ...there is no justification, in a civilized society, for the kind of mass civil disobedience that involves the violation of the rights of others - regardless of whether the demonstrators' goal is good or evil. The end does not justify the means. No one's rights can be secured by the violation of the rights of others. Mass disobedience is an assault on the concept of rights: it is a mob's defiance of legality as such.[40]

There was absolutely nothing, overall, that Rand could see that was positive coming out of the New Left movement.

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[39]Ayn Rand, "The Cashing-In: The Student "Rebellion," (September 1965) in The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution (New York, 1971), 13-56.

[40]Rand, "The Cashing In," 38.

This kind of perception ended up dominating the intellectual writings in such right-wing journals as the National Review and Modern Age. The student radical movement, conservative intellectuals concluded, was devastating to the nation. New leftists had eroded Americans' faith in their institutions and traditions; they had handicapped the army's military options in Vietnam; and they had set dangerous precedents in their protesting which made further interventionist policies politically impossible.[41] Almost all conservatives agreed with William Peterson, at the University of California at Berkeley, in his assessment that American society in the late 1960s was "sicker than ever...(and that)...the infection is spreading and becoming virulent."[42] The left was winning, and only a strong reaction by authorities against the "spreading cancer" would cure society of its ills.

The Old Left's understanding of the political consequences of the New Left, however, was very different than conservatives' understanding. Considering that they were unwelcome in the New Left because of their supposed ties to "establishment liberals," it is not surprising that a high number of prominent social democrats seemed uneasy about the reemergence of radicalism. While some writers were enthusiastic, the majority appeared apprehensive or

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[41]These themes were echoed in many articles written in the National Review between 1966-70. During this period the journal had a regular "From the Academy" column reporting on student demonstrations and its consequences.

[42]William Peterson, "What's Left at Berkeley," Columbia University Forum (Spring 1965); cited in Rand "The Cashing-In," 38.

concerned. Intellectuals on the Left were especially worried that the growing radicalism on the campuses would catalyse divisions within their own movements. The major theme running throughout these writings was what should be done to best capitalize on these unforeseen events.

Michael Harrington was "bewildered and angered as well as heartened by the New Left."[43] While happy that youth seemed more socially concerned than the previous generation, Harrington and other social democrats were alarmed at the pluralistic nature of the movement and the fact that the various New Left organizations accepted Communists as members: "I still feel that the 'a-communism' of the New Left is too agnostic a position in a world in which the bureaucratic collectivist society of communism is both a model for forced industrialization (China) and for the continuation of dictatorship even after capital has been accumulated (Russia)."[44] The New Left was assuming a dangerously naive position, Harrington believed, which could prove to have devastating consequences not only to its own movement but the future of the left as a whole.

Christopher Lasch was frustrated by what he perceived was the tendency of the student movement to alienate its allies. For a progressive revolution to occur, he surmised, the left required the support of the majority to create a mass movement for

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[43]Michael Harrington, "Introduction" to Jack Newfield's Prophetic Minority (New York, 1966), 18.

[44]Harrington, "Introduction," 18.

social change. While the New Left contained "many promising possibilities" in its present form, it did not "represent an alternative social vision capable of attracting large masses to its support." Without this broad based support, Lasch feared, the movement would slip into totalitarianism. In order to prevent this possibility, Lasch recommended, the student leaders needed to "reconcile the need for change with the need for order."[45]

Both Lasch and Harrington were especially concerned that the New Left was ignoring the traditional alliance with the industrial working class. To these two more orthodox left wing intellectuals, this class was still the main instrument of revolutionary change. Failure to recognize this group's importance therefore meant that the movement was doomed. To Lasch, unless the New Left began to "transcend its character" and "forge links with those who work in the main institutions of industrial society," the movement would prove destructive in its impact.[46] Harrington agreed, arguing that it was "sociological inaccuracy and political suicide to dismiss the trade unions, which must be a major component of any new majority."[47] Harrington was hopeful however that he could convert the New Left to his way of thinking, and he "looked forward to the day when radicalism in America will be united and effective, a mass

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[45]Christopher Lasch, "Epilogue" to R. Aya and N. Miller eds., The New American Revolution (London, 1971).

[46]Lasch, "Epilogue."

[47]Harrington, "Introduction," 18.

movement in the very centre of society."[48]

Irving Howe was less optimistic, doubting both the stability and energy of the movement: "And the question must inevitably arise whether the radicalism of the students at Berkeley and elsewhere rests upon serious thought or is the kind of one shot affair which in the past has often paved the way for a later adjustment to the status quo."[49] A former Trotskyist who was active in political battles during the depression era, Howe was especially disturbed by what he recognized as a familiar "rhythm" between the failed radicalism of the 1930s and the New Left movement - a "sudden flare of political interest," followed by a "flurry of activism," and finally the tendency towards "premature ideological hardening" and eventual disintegration.[50] Disillusioned by his experience, Howe feared the younger generation of radicals were making the same mistakes that his generation had made. Only by ensuring that the movement was "rooted in democratic values and democratic procedures," could "radical (or any other) politics...make a deep and lasting impact upon American society."[51]

Howe was also concerned with the sincerity of the protesters. Like many others on the left, he worried about how the New Left

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[48]Harrington, "Introduction," 19. See also Harrington, "The Mystical Militants," New Republic 154 (1966), 20-22.

[49]Irving Howe, "Berkeley and Beyond" in Howe ed., Student Activism (New York, 1967), 62.

[50]Howe, "Berkeley," 62.

[51]Howe, "Berkeley," 63. See also W. C. McWilliams, "Students and Politics: The Would Be Rulers Against the Old," Motive (25 1964).

seemingly emphasized "personal style" in their radicalism over the content of the revolt.[52] Howe especially feared that the existential act of rebelling would prove to be sufficiently satisfying to the student radicals. Lacking both the means to control the emerging movement and the power to stop its growth, Howe helplessly sat on the sidelines looking on "with hope and interest."[53]

This dilemma also haunted Gil Green, the former head of the American Communist Party. Green was especially alarmed by what he perceived was the "cross-fertilization" of marxism and anarchism by New Left intellectuals. While the New Left had "helped to radicalize hundreds of thousands of young people and has challenged the system on its most sensitive and vulnerable side: its moral and ethical hypocrisy," it has also "spun false theories" which were becoming "a major obstacle to the further advance of the movement, particularly at a moment when all signs point to a new period of mounting class struggle ahead."[54] New Left intellectuals, according to Green, had created a "crisis of ideology" in trying to merge individualism with revolutionary sentiments. In failing fully to comprehend what it takes to create a "serious movement for change," the New Left, to Green, threatened the revolutionary possibilities in the United States at a time when the country was

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[52]Irving Howe, "New Styles of Leftism" Dissent (Summer, 1965).

[53]Howe, "Berkeley," 63.

[54]Gil Green, The New Radicalism: Anarchist or Marxist? (New York, 1971), 13-17.

ripe for change.[55]

Overall, the Old Left was uneasy about the rise of student activism on the campuses. Rather then perceiving the New Left as a potential ally against liberal corporatism, these intellectuals tended to view the movement as unwelcome competition in a most inopportune time.[56] Few attempts were made to praise the New Left for any accomplishments it might have made. The Old left's analysis of the student radicalism tended to dissociate itself from the New Left and stressed instead how the New Left was supposedly destroying its own progressive organizations.

When liberal commentators finally did discuss the potential political consequences of the New Left, their approach to the question differed little from that of conservatives or the Old Left. Instead of examining how the New Left might have influenced certain political decisions over the course of the decade, liberal political observers were most interested in determining the consequences of the movement for their own political organizations. Articles written during this period often tended to link student radicalism to the rebirth of conservative electoral patterns in the United States. Writers like Seymour Martin Lipset and Daniel Bell believed that it was the students' unwillingness to settle their grievances that had eroded the public's confidence in the future of

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[55]Green, New Radicalism, 17. See also Irwin Silber, The Cultural Revolution: A Marxist Analysis (New York, 1970).

[56]In fact, the Old Left sought to build substitute youth organizations to the New Left such as the Dubois clubs and the Progressive Labour party. See Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, The New Radicals (New York, 1966).

the nation.[57] To Lipset, the student rebellion was "counterproductive" in that it alienated those outside the movement. "And the practical consequence," Lipset concluded, was "to strengthen considerably conservative political tendencies among the electorate."[58] Lipset and Bell, however, were still confident in the future of liberalism in the United States. They were using student unrest to explain what appeared to them as aberrations: the triumph of Governor Reagan in California and President Nixon in the White House. Other liberal intellectuals such as Nathan Glazer and Lewis Feuer, however, attributed the polarizing effects of the student revolts to their new found appreciation of neo-conservative values.[59]

Glazer was one of a number of liberal intellectuals who credited the student movement with pushing him to the right. Remembering the Answers, a book he wrote in 1970, described his personal political transformation over the course of the decade from a "mild radical" - who supported public housing plans, believed welfare plans were "outdated and "insufficient," was against nuclear arms testing, and sympathetic to Castro - to a

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[57]See Lipset, Rebellion, 250-4.

[58]Lipset, Rebellion, 254.

[59]In the late 1960s, a number of prominent former liberals including Lewis Feuer, Irving Kristol and Nathan Glazer discovered that they now shared more in common with moderates on the right then with their former allies on the left. By "neo-conservative" values, I am referring to a broadening consensus of opinion among those in the center who continued to believe that victory in Vietnam was essential to American national interests and yet were beginning to question many of the social and economic reforms initiated by liberal politicians.

"mild conservative" by 1970 - who felt it increasingly necessary to defend the necessity of preserving American institutions and traditions. The student revolts inspired Glazer in his words to "remember the answers" as to why Marxist and anarchist critiques of contemporary society were "fundamentally wrong."[60] Whether it was the political climate that had changed or rather that the political convictions of liberals had been transformed was unclear, but the trend towards conservatism within the intellectual community was widespread. Other former members of the liberal establishment such as Irving Kristol and Lewis Feuer were now identifying themselves as "neo-conservatives" and regularly contributing editorials to the National Review.

III

The liberal (or neo-conservative) version of the political ramifications of the student activisms appeared most often in historical interpretations written during the early 1970s. Most scholars writing at this time about the political changes taking place in the previous decade tended to imply that the New Left was responsible for the rebirth of conservative values within the electorate and intellectual circles. While some grieved the passing of a more compassionate age, others applauded these trends, sensing that Americans were becoming increasingly realistic about what their government could accomplish. Most of these commentators agreed, however, that this political realignment to the right meant

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[60]Glazer, Remember, 293.

that the New Left movement had completely failed in its agenda.[61]

Liberals sympathetic to the Kennedy-Johnson years were furious with the students, believing that a real opportunity for progressive change had - at least temporarily - been lost. It was not so much the goals of the students that were attacked, however, as their actions. To William O'Neil, the young radicals "failed themselves by giving way to unrestrained emotionalism."[62] Jim Heath agreed, arguing that the students' actions repulsed millions of "ordinary, average hard working citizens."[63] Both Heath and O'Neil presumed that the growing conservative movement was a reaction to the campus disturbances and was not a critique of the liberal vision itself. Neither thought that the conservative mood was permanent: they still considered the United States a liberal nation and assumed that the people would eventually forget the campus disruptions and move back to the center. While the New Left "did much harm," argued O'Neil, it was "mainly to themselves." Concerned more about the premature "burning out of those young lives," then the political ramifications of the New Left's actions, O'Neil did not seem overly concerned with the permanent political damage the New Left might have inflicted on liberalism.[64]

To Peter Clecak, however, the conservative reaction was more

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[61]See for example: O'Neil, Coming Apart; Jim F. Heath, Decades of Disillusionment: The Kennedy-Johnson Years (Bloomington, 1975); Peter Clecak, Radical Paradoxes, (New York, 1973).

[62]O'Neil, Coming Apart, 303.

[63]Heath, Decades of Disillusionment, 30.

[64]O'Neil, Coming Apart, 303.

permanent than liberals believed. The New Left, according to Clecak, would emerge as a "negative lesson" for conservatives in future years to justify political repression of the left:

> Even though the dominant forms of opposition of the sixties such as mass demonstrations, sit-ins, and limited modes of violent rebellion have lost their power, at least for the historical moment, the terrifying symbols of these activities will continue to be used by right-wing political journalists, and publicists of the new conservatism, in much the same way that the bogey of the internal Communist menace survived in popular mythology long after the first stages of the cold war.[65]

Writing from the perspective of the Old left, Clecak charged the student radicals with "sacrificing the power of the socialist vision."[66] The outcome was entirely "predictable," according to Clecak, since the students refused to cooperate with established radical movements in organizing a majority movement across the left. Foreseeing the erosion of civil rights and liberties in the United States' future, Clecak was disapproving in his analysis of the New Left's overall political impact.[67]

George Nash also suggested that the New Left contributed to the resurgence of conservatism in the United States, but his interpretation stressed how the student movement benefitted the intellectual movement on the right.[68] The emergence of the New Left was to Nash one of the primary factors which bound the

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[65]Clecak, Radical Paradoxes, 270.

[66]Clecak, Radical Paradoxes, 272.

[67]Clecak, Radical, 272. See also John Diggins, The American Left in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1973).

[68]George Nash, The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945 (New York, 1976).

fragmented conservative ideology together. While spokespeople for the various components of conservative thought had diverging reactions to the emergence of radicalism on campus, they agreed that the spreading revolutionary sentiments was proof of the bankruptcy of liberalism. Greatly reinvigorated by a new sense of purpose during this "crisis," Nash concluded, conservativism emerged as a "potent intellectual and political force in the 1970s."[69] Right-wing analysts were given greater prestige within academic circles than they had ever enjoyed before, and many liberals were propelled to the right. Stressing only how the New Left's actions benefitted its conservative political foes, this analysis also stressed the movement's failings rather than its accomplishments.

IV

While most who wrote in the early 1970s primarily focused on how the New Left affected the established political movements, there were some interested in understanding its effects on American institutions and values. These historians were more often sympathetic to the student movement, pointing to areas in which the activists had been successful. Kirkpatrick Sale, an empathetic observer of the movement, provided a most authoritative account of the New Left through his archival investigation of the SDS.[70] In Sale's opinion, the New Left established a legacy of deep and permanent worth:

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[69]Nash, Conservative Intellectual, 304.

[70]Kirkpatrick Sale, SDS (New York, 1973).

> (They) opened the way to changes in the national life that would have been unthought of in the fifties; it was in good measure responsible for the changes in university governance, the liberation of campus life, the reordering of curricula, the aeration of American education; it played an important role in moulding public opinion against the war in Southeast Asia and increasing public understanding of the imperialist nature of that war, and in the corollary achievements of weakening the institution of the draft, loosening the overt role of universities in military research, and abolishing or transforming ROTC units at many campuses; and it directly affected the lives and consciousness...of the American young.[71]

Rather then destroying liberalism and the left, Sale argued, the New Left was responsible for "pushing the liberal canon to the left" and "establishing socialism as at least a possible political alternative for a considerable segment of the population."[72] This interpretation set in place the guidelines that most subsequent sympathetic chroniclers of the New Left have followed.

Thomas Powers was another who wrote a positive assessment about the movement in his analysis of the anti-Vietnam protests.[73] A former member of the SNCC, Powers emphasized the role of the New Left in shaping public attitudes against the war and in forcing the government to recognize its failures in Southeast Asia. The New Left created a "crisis" situation in the United States, according to Powers, at exactly the same time Johnson had to decide whether to back away from the war, or commit the country to a vastly increased effort with a dangerous potential. Without the efforts

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[71]Sale, SDS, 657.

[72]Sale, SDS, 8.

[73]Thomas Powers, The War at Home: Vietnam and the American People (New York: 1973).

of the anti-war movement, Powers speculated, "frustrations in Washington" would have likely caused the war to spread even further than it did, resulting in "terrible consequences."[74] Like Sale, Powers argued that the New Left was responsible for making liberalism more socially progressive.

The majority of historians sympathetic to the New Left, however, were more interested in understanding why radicalism had declined and the movement's institutions no longer existed than on emphasizing what the movement had accomplished. A series of books and articles appeared in the early 1970s attributing the movement's disintegration to political infighting and internal divisions. To A. Adelson, "splits" in the New Left "led it into extinction" much like many other "species of political groups" that had similarly disappeared.[75] Ed Bacciocco, Jr., agreed, arguing that the movement "self-destructed" because of "political naivete," as well as "poor judgement," and a growing "addiction to violence."[76] In the opinion of Greg Calvert and Carol Nieman, the growing intolerance of the SDS and the replacement of "anarchist style of early years" with the "pseudo-scientific" language of Marxist-Leninism made the movement unpalatable to the majority of its

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[74]Powers, The War at Home, xiv-xv, 318.

[75]A. Adelson, SDS (New York, 1972), xi.

[76]Ed Bacciocco Jr. The New Left in America (Stanford, 1974), 226-252. See also: Elinor Langer, "Notes for Next Time," Working Papers for a New Society 1 3 (1973); E. E. Ericson, Radicals in the University (Stanford, 1975); Irwin Unger, The Movement: A History of the American New Left, 1959-72 (New York, 1974).

followers.[77] The assumption of most of these authors was that the New Left was a "failure" because it was unable to develop an ideology to unite its members.

V

This sense of defeatism was reinforced with the publication of the personal memoirs of several former New Left leaders, including Paul Potter, Dotson Rader, Julius Lester, and Jerry Rubin.[78] Taken together, these books described how students readjusted their lifestyles and beliefs to account for the new reality once their organizations collapsed. The radicals seemed preoccupied with searching for a new transcendence. They were self-absorbed and turning inwards. Reflecting back on their days in the spotlight, many of the authors began to assume almost an apologetic tone. Consequently, the negative perception of the students' legacy remained unchanged.

Rubin's autobiography, Growing (Up) at Thirty Seven (1976) certainly achieved the most notoriety. The former YIPPIE leader, it seemed, was completely re-evaluating his own life and especially his role in the New Left movement. While still firmly committed to the earlier social values he protested for, Rubin was reassessing

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[77]Greg Calvert and Carol Neiman, A Disrupted History (1971) 140. See also Elinor Langer, "Notes for Next Time," Working Papers for a New Society 1 3 (1973).

[78]Paul Potter, A Name for Ourselves (Boston, 1971); Dotson Rader, Blood Dues (New York, 1973); Julius Lester, All is Well (New York, 1976); and Jerry Rubin, Growing (Up) at Thirty-Seven (New York, 1976).

both his own personal motives for getting involved as well as those of his friends. Feeling obviously disappointed with the movement's accomplishments, Rubin's personal memoirs helped reinforce stereotypes about the New Left and its accomplishments.

As with many other former student radicals, Jerry Rubin was greatly concerned with why the movement's organizations deteriorated so quickly at the end of the 1960s. Rubin believed he had been betrayed by his friends and radical allies. He spoke of personal competition within the movement, of battles over egos and of his car being bombed by a rival New Left organization. "It wasn't the FBI, CIA, or Pentagon that scored this victory over the 'leaders of the Left,'" he wrote. "We were eaten for breakfast by our own. When we in the movement realized we weren't going to dismantle the system, we turned our hostility against each other. In 1969, the movement began to amass real power, and we began to criticize each other, more effectively than the repressive society ever did."[79] In other words, Rubin argued, the New Left "feared success."

Rubin also wrote about his declining sense of radical energy during the last days of the movement. When his YIPPIE organization died, he felt terribly disillusioned and depressed, with phases of low energy and loss of ambition. During this period, Rubin believed, he was experiencing "male menopause:" his values and outlook on life were gradually changing. In truth," he admitted, "I had become more conservative; aging had mellowed me. I didn't

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[79]Rubin, Growing (Up), 8.

feel old but I was no longer young."[80] He grew increasingly concerned about his own personal security and acknowledged that he had bought stocks during this time, had made money for speeches and writing, and had remained in hotel rooms while others camped outside. "While I stayed true to my commitment," Rubin argued, "I did feel the edge come off my anger against the system. It was not a conscious process, but slowly, insidiously, the presence of money in my pockets made me feel privileged and mellowed out my radicalism."[81]

Much of the rest of the book detailed Rubin's "journey into himself," describing various methods, including yoga, eastern religion and sex therapy the author used in an attempt to find a "new level of consciousness." In this period, Rubin believed, he became increasingly aware of his personal anxiety at being short, of his fears of sexual inadequacy and of his inferiority complex growing up as the son of a truck driver in a wealthy Jewish neighbourhood in Cincinnati. Looking back on his own childhood, Rubin recollected that he constantly felt compelled by the need to prove himself both to others and to maintain his own self-esteem. Rubin discussed extensively his uneasy relationship with his parents, his personal breakdown following his parents' deaths in the early 1960s, and how he blamed the system and the hospitals especially for his father's death. Internal struggles, Rubin seemed to suggest, motivated him personally to take action against

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[80]Rubin, Growing Up, 8.

[81]Rubin, Growing Up, 104.

the wider society at large.

While still believing in the "need for collective action, confrontation and transfers of power from the few to the many" Rubin now argued that changing the political-economic level requires concentrating on the personal, spiritual, and consciousness levels of life. In other words, Rubin seemed to imply, before changing society, radicals must understand themselves.[82] "We acted like we had all the answers," he concluded, "and we didn't. As I grow older I am learning how much I do not know about life. I am still searching like a child for security and total happiness when it does not exist. I will still be growing (up) on my death bed."[83]

Similar themes were echoed by other former radicals. Andrew Kopkind, a former student activist, documented for Ramparts magazine in the summer of 1973 what his friends within the movement were doing since the collapse of the New Left organizations.[84] Like Rubin, many other former radicals were also searching for a new transcendence, often drifting off into mystical oriental religions. Noting the increasing popularity of spiritualism amongst his peers, Kopkind suggested that the New Left formed a means for political escapism and fantasy. "My impression," the former student radical argued, "is that many people who once found

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[82]Rubin, Growing Up, 206.

[83]Rubin, Growing Up, 189.

[84]Andrew Kopkind, "Mystic Politics: Refugees from the New Left," Ramparts 12 (July, 1973).

the universe of political action and ideology meaningful and enlivening, now find it empty and boring - and on top of that they feel guilty for being bored."[85] Rather than challenging the interpretations of student unrest presented by the intellectual establishment, the remnants of the New Left seemed willing to support their critics' interpretation of the decade that had just transpired.

Conclusion

By the mid-1970s, books on the New Left had slowed down to a trickle and the subject seemed to have lost its momentum. Sociologists, political scientists and other commentators turned their attentions to other contemporary concerns. A dominant interpretation of the decade emerged, stressing both that the movement was a failure and that it was destructive in its impact. The sincerity of the protesters' motives was increasingly under attack with a popular myth developing suggesting that the former student radicals had supposedly abandoned their utopian values and succumbed to materialist impulses. Ultimately discredited both in academic journals and in the press, it would be years before New Left sympathizers would do anything to try to change this dominant image.

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[85]Kopkind, "Mystic," 23.

CHAPTER SIX: THE REVISIONISM OF THE 1980S-90s

Introduction:

In the past several years, the history of the New Left has regained much of its popular appeal. A host of recent films, television programs and books have chronicled the origins and development of student radicalism in the 1960s, greatly reinvigorating old debates.[1] Commentators have attributed much of this interest to the regular cycles of nostalgia that prompt Americans to recall the historical era of their youth.[2] What differentiates this wave of generational nostalgia from others, however, is the number of serious academic studies designed not simply for commercial exploitation but to politically mobilize - readers.

Many of the social scientists embarking on these projects are former activists now established within the universities. Believing that the prevalent view of the New Left movement in the United States is overwhelmingly negative, these authors present their studies as efforts to overturn this perception. They argue that the New Left was a serious movement that broke important new

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[1]For other reviews, see: Richard Snow, "The New Left Revisited: A Look at Recent Literature," Journal of American Studies 19 2 (1985), 239-54; Maurice Isserman, "The Not-So Dark and Bloody Ground: New Works on the 1960s," American Historical Review 95 4 (1990), 991-1010; Paul Buhle, "Remembering the Sixties" Oral History Review 17 1 (1989), 137-142; Ron Eyerman, "Between History and Sociology," Theory and Society 18 (1989), 531-545; Winifred Breines, "Whose New Left," The Journal of American History 75 2 (1988) 528-45.

[2]See for example: Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," The American Historical Review 96 2 (April, 1991), 456.

ground politically and culturally but fell short of realizing the inflated dreams of the era. As Maurice Isserman noted in a review article, the revisionist portrayal of the New Left that emerges within these new books "is one of a movement that, though not without its flaws, challenged a generation of Americans to confront the worst shortcomings of their own society."[3] This new assessment has greatly contested traditional assessments of the period, which have tended to stress unconscious motivational forces to explain the students' actions and have emphasized harmful consequences associated with the movement's legacy.

While a rejuvenated critical response to the recent writings is beginning to emerge, it is too early to tell if this effect will redirect the momentum away from the New Left writers. Both critics and former students are now actively attempting to reshape public memory of the meaning of the New Left. This chapter will assess both critical and sympathetic portrayals of the movement in the contemporary literature on the subject. For the first time, it appears that a more positive version of student unrest may emerge as the predominant image of the 1960s.

I

The origins of the revisionist trends within the historiography are difficult to determine. A few books and articles were written on the New Left in the early 1970s that did stress the positive aspects of the radical students' actions, but

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[3]Isserman, "The Not-So-Dark," 991.

the overwhelming majority were negative, reflecting the political biases of those controlling the universities' history departments.[4] This interpretation dominated the literature throughout the 1970s, through to the rise of the Reagan counter-revolution at the end of the decade. At this time, two new assessments appeared, Milton Viorst's oral history Fire in The Streets (1979) and Dick Cluster's They Should Have Served That Cup of Coffee, (1979) the first signal that a more positive assessment of the student radicals might be forthcoming. Soon afterwards, autobiographies by Abby Hoffman, the former YIPPIE leader, and David Harris, a founder of The Resistance, appeared.[5] But it was not until after the release of the movie The Big Chill, (1983) and its subsequent soundtrack double album, that the real momentum for recapturing the "spirit of the decade" began in earnest.

The majority of the most recent studies have been written by those who had direct experience in the movement and continue to share at least some of its original assumptions.[6] Most of these authors are white male intellectuals, there have been very few female or black chroniclers of the decade. The books are most often written from a first person point of view as partial autobiographies, or at the very least as personal journalism. They

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[4]For more details, see Chapter 5.

[5]Abby Hoffman, Soon to be a Major Motion Picture (New York, 1980); Hoffman, Square Dancing in the Ice Age (New York, 1982); David Harris, Dreams Die Hard: Three Men's Journeys Through the Sixties (New York, 1982).

[6]Isserman, "Not-So-Dark," 991.

tend to be event-centred history, with the authors emphasizing key turning points in their respective narratives of the decade. The history is generally told from the top down, focusing largely on national organizations such as SDS and the movement's leaders, rather than the participants at the local level. The authors like to stress the uniqueness of the values of the 1960s, and condemn what they perceive is the growing pessimistic, apathetic, materialistic and individualistic nature of contempory society.[7] The present conservative political climate is portrayed as the "mirror image" of the New Left, and the books are written, as Ron Eyerman asserts, as a "form of therapy and hope for the future," for both the authors and the reading public.[8]

Of the recent wave of sympathetic analyses, the most common narrative of the decade celebrates only the early years of the student movement. The authors write from the perspective of those involved in the earlier New Left and distance themselves from the more radical and militant later movement after 1968. To Todd Gitlin, James Miller, and Maurice Isserman, the movement disintegrated from within when it abandoned its founding principles and turned to ideologies not appropriate for American conditions.[9]

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[7]Isserman, "Not-So-Dark," 999-1002.

[8]Eyerman, "Between History and Sociology," 531. See also Buhle, "remembering the Sixties," 137.

[9]James Miller, Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago (New York, 1987). Todd Gitlin, The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage (New York, 1987). Maurice Isserman, If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left (New York, 1987). See also the P.B.S. documentary, "Berkeley in the Sixties," (1987).

condemning the apathy they sense amongst today's youth, these socialist commentators tend to look back at the decade with regret that so little has changed as a result of their efforts.

James Miller was a former member of the anarchist faction of the SDS who later became a rock critic for Newsweek magazine. His book, Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago (1987) is an analysis of the ideological origins of the New Left and especially the SDS through a collective biography of early leaders Al Haber, Richard Flacks, Steve Max, Bob Moss, Sharon Jeffery, Paul Booth, and Tom Hayden. In Miller's account, the contributions of these leaders were central to both the formation of the SDS and the ideological development of the movement. Focusing in on the original meetings in Port Huron, Michigan, Miller traces the evolution of ideas which went into creating the Port Huron statement, the New Left's manifesto. Inspired by such writers as C. Wright Mills and Arnold Kaufman, and rejecting the older ideological solutions to contemporary problems, the early leaders proposed an alternative political philosophy which promised to give individuals more control over their lives and make government more responsible to the wishes of the people. Miller perceives the New Left ideology developed by these early leaders as decentralized, self-governing socialism with unstructured organizations. All major decisions would be decided by a vote and all members would be equally responsible for society's ills. Students were especially attracted to these values, he argues, and the Port Huron Statement emerged as a "pivotal document" to rally

support behind the cause.[10]

The downfall of the New Left, Miller infers, came about as a result of the failure of early leaders to develop a coherent political theory of participatory democracy. As the movement expanded its base of support, confusions developed as alternative, more authoritarian visions of society made their way into the various organizations. Rather than intellectually clarifying how democracy could function adequately and justly, Miller contends, the later leadership preferred experimenting with "direct action." Participatory democracy gave way to personal "authenticity," opening the way for divergent interests to compete for power. With the takeover of the SDS by Progressive Labour, the movement's main organization turned into a rigid hierarchial structure and lost almost all its initial sympathy and support. "America's last great experiment in democratic idealism," had failed, Miller concludes, because of an unresolved vulnerability rooted in the movement's early years.[11]

Miller treats the student movement more as university-based youth movements with ideological foundations in left-wing intellectual thought rather than something directly connected to civil rights participation by white activists. He argues explicitly against the idea that the SNCC had any influence on SDS theory and practice, and he places all his emphasis on the intellectual traditions of radicals such as Mills and Kaufman.

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[10]Miller, Democracy is in the Streets, 13.

[11]Miller, "Democracy is in the Streets, 16.

Much work has been done, however, emphasizing the linkages and overlapping nature of the ideas and practices between the civil rights movement and the New Left.[12] To these analysts, the experiments initiated in the south by civil rights leaders served as a model for the New Left and as an inspirational source for radical activism.

Doug McAdam's book Freedom Summer (1988) describes the importance of the SNCC's Freedom summer project to the lives of white activists who ventured south to Mississippi in 1964 to help register black voters. Comparing the future values of those who participated with those who applied but were rejected by SNCC officials, McAdam finds substantial differences. Those experienced in the voting registration campaigns became more active and radical than their peers, and their life choices remained truer to their convictions. Unlike their counterparts, the activists who went to Mississippi have remained politically active throughout their lives; they earn less money, and are less likely to have married or had children. According to McAdam, the student radicals' commitment to radical causes intensified as they were exposed to the brutality of segregation in the south.[13] The Mississippi Freedom summer project permanently engrained a new sense of radical

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[12]see for example: Stewart Burns, Social Movements of the 1960s: Searching for Democracy (Boston, 1990); Bret Eyron, "Community in Motion: The Free Speech Movement, Civil Rights and the Roots of New Left, "Oral History Review 17 1 (1989). 39-60. Both writers stress the parallels in tactics and organization and the common underlying assumptions about American society these groups shared.

[13]Doug McAdam, Freedom Summer (New York, 1988).

urgency among those who participated.

While MacAdam has linked civil rights participation to the resurgence of the New Left, others have made connections between the SNCC, the SDS and the women's movement. In her book, Personal Politics, (1980) Sarah Evans draws several parallels among the origins, goals and strategies of the three movements. In Evans' opinion, the three movements emerged primarily as reactions to the alienation of modern life; they similarly desired revolutionary changes in American society in order to reverse obvious injustices; and they applied similar strategies in order to achieve their goals through tactics such as non-violent direct action. In all three movements, Evans contends, women played important roles in community organizing. Drawing from her own personal experience as a southern activist as well as those of others in the SDS and the SNCC, Evans suggests that the new feminism was rooted in both the civil rights and New Left movements.[14]

The earlier movements, according to Evans, both frustrated and inspired women in their quest for equal rights. Although women actively contributed, Evans argues, they were continuously denied the respect they deserved from radical males within the organizations. They were assigned traditionally female tasks such as cooking and cleaning and were denied positions of authority. Refusing to take the ideas of their female allies seriously, radical male leaders continued to make all the major decisions.

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[14]Sarah Evans, Personal Politics: The Roots of The Women's Liberation Movement in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York, 1980).

When women did raise the question of their equality within the movements, Evans claims, they were met by "a combination of indifference, ridicule and anger. Women were hooted at, threatened with rape, accused of divisiveness and betrayal."[15] This sexism within the organizations eventually left women with no alternative but to break apart from the New Left and devote themselves solely to women's liberation.

While Miller, McAdam and Evans focus on the intellectual evolution of the New Left, Todd Gitlin, the SDS president for 1963-4, analyses the cultural origins of student radicalism. In The Sixties: Days of Hope, Days of Rage (1987), Gitlin argues that the popular culture of the 1950s formed a generational identity in its children, a shared sense of alienation and mission. Drawing on his own personal experiences as well as those of his friends, Gitlin describes a wide ranging collection of influences that were particularly inspirational: such as the "appeal of martyrs" in movies starring James Dean and Marlon Brando, the radicalism and anti-establishment stance of Elvis Presley and other rock and roll stars, and the "narcissism" of satirical magazines such as Mad. This "Zeitgeist" culture, he suggests, created a sense of rebelliousness among the younger generation against the constraints of middle-class America. Those later aroused to take action were particularly influenced by the new co-operative living styles and approaches to society coming from the various "subterranean

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[15]See Sara Evans and Harry Boyte, Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America (New York, 1986), 104.

channels" of underground culture such as the Beat poets.[16]

By 1960, Gitlin believes, the stage had been set for a renewed radicalism in the United States. There was a widespread desire among those in their college years to serve the community in some way rather than go straight to work. Cultural disaffection soon merged with political insurgency as students began reading the underground press as well as intellectual mentors such as David Riesman, Paul Goodman, William Appleman Williams, Herbert Marcuse and C. Wright Mills. Inspired by the civil rights and anti-war movements, and led by former socialists and "red diaper babies," Gitlin argues, student radicals channelled their hostilities and frustrations into political activism.

Since he was an early organizer, Gitlin's book is especially valuable in providing intimate detail about the inner workings of the SDS in the movement's formative years. Like Miller, however, Gitlin's bias favours the "old New Left, the Pre-Vietnam New Left" and condemns the later movement, when the early leaders lost control of movement and when the Vietnam issue began to crowd out other social concerns. Gitlin blames the later leaders of the movement for relying too exclusively on the news media for attention while not developing sound courses of action. In The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left (1980), Gitlin argued that newspapers and television coverage really changed the evolution of the organization's

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[16]Gitlin, Sixties 26-30.

development. While initially pulling the New Left's agenda into national prominence, the news media, in Gitlin's opinion, ultimately contributed to the movement's disintegration. Leaders began to depend on the media, and what became correct policy was what would gain newsworthy attention.[17] Unable to develop a theoretical foundation to build upon, leaders turned towards anti-intellectualism and less organization. As the movement became imprisoned by the media for its identity, Gitlin concludes, it lost its initial focus and became commercialized and trivialized.[18]

In a review of the books by Gitlin and Miller, historian Maurice Isserman noticed in their narratives "a sense of causality that borders on predestination."[19] The two authors suggest in their analysis that the movement was doomed to failure and that "no last minute changes of strategy or leadership would have sufficed to save the New Left from problems that were present from the beginning."[20] While the New Left Miller describes found it impossible to reconcile its two intermingled founding ideological traditions, "civic republicanism and existentialism," Gitlin's New Left was unable to control its narcissistic, self-disparaging

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[17]Gitlin is especially critical of YIPPIE leaders Abby Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, perceiving the flamboyant spokesmen as celebrity seekers who shouted slogans and rhetoric rather than provide calm intellectual analysis and criticism. Gitlin, The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left (Berkeley, 1980), 238.

[18]Gitlin, Whole World is Watching, 1-12.

[19]Isserman, "Not-So-Dark," 992.

[20]Isserman, "Not-So Dark," 994.

cultural tendencies. In Isserman's opinion, commentators on the movement needed to "restore a sense of human agency, choice, and culpability to this history."[21] What happened in the 1960s, as Isserman argues, was not necessarily inevitable and to assume such a fatalistic approach trivializes the difficult decisions and choices people had to make. Individuals can and do make a difference in the outcome of events.

Isserman's own work on the history of student radicalism, If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and The Birth Of the New Left (1987) does present his subjects' controlling their own destinies, and yet his narrative also distinguishes a "good" early movement from a "bad" later movement. A former active member of the early SDS, Isserman originally set out on a study of the Old Left of the 1950s and not the New Left. He found so many continuities between the two generations, however, that he found his project gradually changing its focus:

> The more I looked into the history of the radical movements of the 1950s, the more it became apparent that I was laboring under a misconception about both the death of the Old Left and the birth of the New Left. I gradually came to understand that the early New Left had emerged from the Old Left in many ways that would make it difficult to perceive exactly where the one ended and the other began.[22]

Contrary to popular misconceptions, Isserman asserts, the early New Left was more of a "merging of traditions and resources" rather than "simply a break with the past."[23] Interactions between the

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[21] Isserman, "Not-So-Dark," 1009.

[22] Isserman, If I Had a Hammer, xii.

[23] Isserman, If I Had a Hammer, 207.

two generations were essential in shaping the student movements of the early 1960s. The Old Left network provided much of the funding for early New Left activities and was involved in the formulation of early policies. Many of the early student leaders were trained within organizations such as the League for Industrial Democracy (LID) or came from radical family backgrounds.

In Isserman's opinion, the major problem developing within the later New Left was its increasing resistance to accepting help from the older generation, preferring instead a fresh start, free from the old debates. In refusing to learn from the experiences of the older generation, Isserman argues, later New Left leaders failed to build on the strengths of the Old Left. No strong, centralized organizations were created, and consequently the movement was confused and misdirected at key times in its history. Instead of establishing a long-term approach to building something permanent, leaders instead chose to pursue limited goals and were satisfied with small victories. If the New Left had been more willing to work with other protest groups of the 1960s, Isserman suggests, then its crusade for progressive change would have been far more pronounced. Overall, Isserman concludes, the movement's arrogance and ignorance of history led to its ultimate alienation and insignificance.

Almost all the recent histories of the New Left note a turning point during the year 1968, when frustrations with unfulfilled expectations reached a crisis level. There are several studies

that examine this year in isolation to note the transformation.[24] Charles Kaiser's book, 1968 in America: Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture and the Shaping of a Generation (1988) focuses primarily on the public events of 1968 and especially follows the campaign of Eugene McCarthy from its origins to its death at the Chicago convention.[25] In Kaiser's estimation, McCarthy represented to radical students the final and only solution to the Vietnam crisis. As the year dragged on and the Democratic candidate's chances of winning clearly deteriorated, he suggests, the youth in America became increasingly disillusioned by the entire political process. Unable to penetrate the Democratic party's establishment, Kaiser argues, the anti-war movement abandoned all faith that change could be achieved through traditional channels. While many activists turned inward to the counter-culture, others began developing more militant, violent solutions.

Kaiser's critical appraisal of this transformation parallels the commentaries by Gitlin, Miller, and Isserman in celebrating the goals of the early movement and condemning the supposed senselessness of the later period. These authors suggest that the later movement did not properly build upon the kind of disciplined, democratic, and centralized organization suitable for American politics. To Winifred Breines, who was involved in the New Left

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[24]see, for example: D. Caute, The Year of the Barricades: A Journey Through 1968 (New York, 1968); H. Koning, 1968: A Personal Report (New York, 1987); Irwin and Debi Unger, Turning Point, 1968 (New York, 1988).

[25]Charles Kaiser, 1968 in America: Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture and the Shaping of a Generation (New York, 1988).

throughout the entire decade, this kind of perspective "eerily" reconstitutes the "male voice" that controlled the SDS in its early years:

> Their early goals, college achievements, elite status in the movements, and contemporary authorship suggest a trajectory of success that may have contributed to their estrangement from the movement late in the decade and certainly informs their respective interpretations.[25]

Gitlin, Miller, and Isserman represent the views of the "old guard," according to Breines, who when "pushed aside" later in the decade, became disillusioned and abandoned the cause.

While also sharing a positive evaluation of the early New Left, Breines argues that those writing from the perspective of the "old guard," exaggerate "both the role of leadership and organization in the New Left and the significance of the collapse of the SDS."[27] By focusing too much on organizations and parties, "these accounts diminish the mass movement after 1968: regional and local activity that did not depend on a national organization, grass-roots organizing by students and other activists (including women and black people), the counterculture, and the birth of other movements such as the women's liberation and gay movements."[28] To Breines, what success the New Left did have occurred at the local and regional levels more than in the actions of the national SDS. The decentralized character of the movement and its utopian vision inspired so many people to join the cause.

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[26]Breines, "Whose New Left," 531.

[27]Breines, "Whose New Left," 530.

[28]Breines, "Whose New Left," 530, 531.

In Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-8: The Great Refusal (1982), Breines expands on this idea by focusing on the New Left's efforts to develop what she calls "prefigurative politics."[29] This concept required that radicals adopt the values in the present which they hoped would someday become universal. The students' main concern throughout the decade, according to Breines, was to achieve political power through organizations dedicated to the greatest amount of personal freedom. In attempting to create this ideal in lived action and behaviour, the student radicals successively experimented with alternative political and social living arrangements. These attempts to build new communities, she contends, inspired many to join the movement. The New Left "blossomed" in the years after 1968, becoming "more powerful in the everyday lives of thousands." Real changes were initiated in the United States during these years as the entire culture was opened up to scrutiny.[30]

Rather than linking the decline of the movement to the disintegration of the SDS, Breines suggests that self-directed local activities continued into the early 1970s. She also takes issue with those who have attributed the escalation of tensions in later years to the supposed self-indulgence and lack of discipline of later radicals. The violence in later years, Breines argues, was state-perpetuated and a reflection of American culture and

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[29]Winifred Breines, Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-8: The Great Refusal (New York, 1982).

[30]Breines, "Whose New Left" 531, 543.

society as a whole. The movement did not disintegrate from within, Breines concludes, but lost its momentum because of government repression.[31]

The focus of Breines' study is the American New Left only; in doing so, she seems to imply that the major ideas of the movement were indigenous to the United States. Most of the recent assessments of the movement draw similar conclusions, attempting to place the New Left movement in the context of the larger history of reform in the United States.[32] The former activists justify their actions on the grounds that they were attempting to make American conditions more consonant with American ideals. There have recently been a number of analysts, however, stressing the international experience of student radicalism.[33]

In 1968: A Student Generation in Revolt (1988), a team of researchers led by Ronald Fraser, the former editor of the British journal The New Left Review, conducted extensive interviews with 175 former student radicals in six countries, West Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Northern Ireland, and a half dozen districts in the United States.[34] They discovered universal sensibilities among their subjects, a world sentiment desiring the transformation of

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[31]Breines, "Whose New Left," 539.

[32]See James Gilbert, "New Left: Old America," in Sohnya Sayres, et al, eds., The 60s Without Apology (Minneapolis, 1984), 246.

[33]Paul Berman, "Don't Follow Leaders," New Republic (August 10/17 1987), 28-35; Caute, Year of the Barricades.

[34]Ronald Fraser et al., 1968: A Student Generation in Revolt (New York, 1988).

capitalist society. Both the American and the European movements seemed to have passed through similar stages of experience and levels of consciousness which "progressively converged by the end of the decade".[5] The authors attribute these similar patterns to the growth of mass communications and transatlantic cross-influences in the 1960s.

Although the authors of 1968 disagree with those who have suggested that the student movement in the United States was unique, they do nevertheless indicate that the majority of New Left ideas were founded primarily on American traditions. While the European New Left brought a more sophisticated understanding of traditional leftist practices and theoretical models to the movement, Fraser et al. argue that the American New Left inspired the new radical approach to politics. Most of the most significant new ideas (such as participatory democracy and direct action) flowed eastward across the Atlantic. The American New Left set the pace and style of protest, especially in the anti-war movement against the United States' involvement in Vietnam.

Historian George Katsiaficas challenges this assessment, arguing that the Third World represented the vanguard of the international movements. In The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968 (1987), Katsiaficas contends that American and European students in the 1960s were inspired to action by the revolutionary movements in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Applying the ideas of such Third World heroes as Mahatma Ghandi,

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[35]Fraser et al., 1968, 3

Regis Debray and Che Guevera to their own experiences, black liberation movements and student radicals in the United States increasingly came to understand the imperialist and oppressive nature of the capitalist structure. A new "vision of a qualitatively different world-system" was emerging by 1968, according to Katsiaficas, fusing "the various national, ethnic, and gender movements into a world-historical movement."[36] Combined in their desire to overthrow the capitalist establishment, he contends, radicals in the United States, Europe and in the Third World began an intensive campaign for world revolution.

As Breines noted in her review, Katsiaficas's study is one of only a few efforts attempting to retrieve "the emancipatory dimensions of the now widely scorned 1968 movements."[37] He endorses the New Left's later alliance with the North Vietnamese, praises the courage of the Black Panthers and the Weather Underground and accepts the turn to militancy and violence as a necessary pre-condition to revolution. Agreeing with Breines's assessment that the revolutionary movements did not disintegrate from within but fell victim to government suppression, Katsiaficas expresses unqualified support for the later New Left. Overall, Katsiaficas is still optimistic about the future possibilities of revolutionary change, and he looks back on the later period as an inspirational model of social change.

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[36]George Katsiaficas, The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968 (New York, 1987), 21.

[37]Breines, "Whose New Left," 530.

Journalist Annie Gotlieb has also looked to the Third World for the source of the movement's main ideas, but her interests are more in cultural rather than political philosophy. In her book Do you Believe in Magic? The Second Coming of the Sixties Generation, (1987) Gotlieb stresses how the dominant culture in the United States was opened up to scrutiny when increasingly confronted with other cultures, religions and ideologies. According to Gotlieb, rapid technological advancements in communication and transportation in the post-war era allowed for greater interaction between Americans and those in other parts of the world. By the 1960s, she believes, external ideas imported especially from the Third World began expressing themselves in new ways of living and of relating to people in the United States. There was a growing interest among American young people in mysticism, internationalism, conservation and peace.[38] Rejecting the ethnocentric and materialistic American value system, Gotlieb concludes, the young increasingly challenged the legitimacy of the government and its institutions.

In portraying the 1960s struggles as primarily a cultural conflict between generations, Gotlieb de-emphasizes the ideological differences among the major youth groups. The student protesters, the counter-culture and the hippies emerge as a single movement, desiring the overthrow of the traditional American value system. The PBS documentary, It was Twenty Years Ago Today (1987)

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[38]Annie Gotlieb, Do You Believe in Magic? The second coming of the Sixties Generation (New York, 1987).

reinforces this kind of perception. By combining the recollections of such different personalities as George Harrison, Mick Jagger, Timothy Leary, Abby Hoffman, and former members of "the Diggers" in one film, the editors of the documentary attempt to present a single "meaning" which captures the "spirit" of the era.[39]

This linkage of counter cultural leaders with former members of the New Left represents another effort by sympathetic analysts to redefine how the 1960s are remembered. While these recent narratives of the 1960s by ex-student radicals differ in their various interpretations as to the actual meaning of the decade, they share the common desire to create a more positive perception of the movement than that which was presented by previous historians. Rather than stressing the New Left's perceived shortcomings, ex-student radicals are now emphasizing how they helped reshape the United States to become a more humane society. It remains to be seen whether or not this revisionist history will accomplish what its writers hope: to inspire in contemporary society a greater desire for progressive change by reinvigorating a more idealistic past.

II

One of the problems continuing to plague those who wish to revitalize the New Left in the United States is that a number of ex-radicals have recanted their former beliefs, dismissing their association with the movement as the product of utopian dreaming

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[39]PBS documentary, It was Twenty Years Ago Today (1987). See also Rolling Stone (summer 1987) which devotes an entire issue to the 1960s movements and makes similar linkages.

and youthful misadventure. While the actual quantity of books written from this perspective is modest, the familiarity of the names of these writers has given this point of view some notoriety. David Horowitz and Jeffery Herf are two prominent radical leaders who have described their own personal journeys away from the political left and towards the center and right.[40] Now highly critical of the legacy of the New Left, these authors present their works as attempts to preserve traditional American values and institutions.

Cyrill Levitt, author of the book Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties (1984), was a former participant in New Left student activism in Canada in the late 1960s who later turned his back on radicalism to study sociology. Basing his research largely on extensive interviews with former student leaders in the United States, Canada and West Germany, Levitt examines the changing conditions of life facing middle class youth in the 1950s and 1960s and the changing role of the university during this time. Stressing the elitist economic background of most of the radicals, Levitt argues that the students' movements in all three countries were remarkably similar: "They were revolts of privilege against privilege, for privilege in a society in which

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[40]David Horowitz and Peter Collier, Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties (New York, 1989); Jeffery Herf, "The New Left: Reflections and Reconsiderations," in Political Passages: Journeys of Change Through Two Decades, 1968-88 (New York, 1989).

the character of privilege had been changing."[41] When the "students of privilege" discovered that their own elite positions in society were threatened they revolted, not so much to abolish the system as to take control of it.

According to Levitt, students believed that the promise of the good life, following their university careers was threatened in the 1960s by the "massification" of the intellectual elite and the "devaluation" of the university degree. With more young people entering higher education than ever before, Levitt argues, students realized that obtaining a university degree no longer ensured their entrance into privileged positions in society. By means of Marxist ideology, the student radicals in the early 1960s came to identify their own position in society with reference to other disadvantaged groups. Fearing the growing proletarianization of society, the students sought to establish the elitist claims that they had been denied. In reducing all aspects of the student revolts to their materialist roots, Levitt attributes the decline of the movement in the late 1960s to unemployment, the slowing of the boom in higher education and the widening gap between the activist leadership and the mass of students.

Levitt's book reinvigorates the traditional approach that critics have used to explain why students entered the New Left in the 1960s and why they behaved as they did in the movement. Rather than examining the democratic and communitarian ideals of the

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[41]Cyril Levitt, Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties (Toronto, 1984), 4.

student protesters, Levitt is content to suggest that the student protesters were driven by unconscious structural determinants. The students did not enter the movement based on moral-political choices as they believed they did but because of external structural dynamics of which they were unaware.[42] This theme has been repeated by psychologists Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter as well, in their examination of the role of personality in motivating political action, Roots of Radicalism: Jews, Christians and the New Left (1982).[43] Relying on information acquired primarily through interviews, surveys and personality tests, Rothman and Lichter found their subjects motivated not so much by morality or other public issues but by deep seated, unattractive, psychological needs.

Rothman and Lichter's work on student radicals differs from other psychological studies conducted during the 1960s in focusing primarily on the religious background of the individual protesters. Noting the disproportionably high percentage of Jews in the movement, Rothman and Lichter argue that this trend should be attributed to the ethnic group's awareness of social marginality. Jewish people were not rebelling against imperialism or capitalism, argue the authors, but because they wished to undermine the system that had created their insecurity. Christian rebels, on the other

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[42]Levitt, Children of Privilege. 150-56. For a critique of this approach see Winifred Breines, "The Sixties Again: Books on the New Left," Theory and Society 14 (1985), 511-23.

[43]Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter, Roots of Radicalism: Jews, Christians and the New Left (New York, 1982).

hand, were driven by their desires to establish a "new more righteous authority structure that they could lead or join."[44] According to the authors, the New Left was an outlet for Protestant and Catholic radicals to release their sense of rage and hostility against "weak and corrupt authorities."[45] Paralleling the "authoritarian personality thesis" used by Adorno, Horkheimer et al in the 1950s to explain the rise of Nazism in Germany, Rothman and Lichter argue that the Christian rebels in the New Left were driven by the desire for more powerful, authoritarian leaders to run the country.[46]

When examining the movement's later years, the authors find even more evidence to support their thesis. Rothman and Lichter contend that the turn to violence at the end of the 1960s was also psychologically motivated, based on the participants' combined fascination and revulsion with destruction. These aggressive impulses, the authors argue, were present within the "radical psyche" of New Left protesters from the movement's earliest years. In questioning the mental health of those in the New Left, Rothman and Lichter have reinforced the long standing tradition that implies that the students were unaware of the true reasons they rebelled.

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[44]Rothman and Lichter, Roots of Radicalism, x.

[45]Rothman and Lichter, Roots of Radicalism, 388.

[46]Rothman and Lichter, Roots of Radicalism, 150.

III

In assessing the consequences of the protesters' actions, most critics of the New Left continue to stress the same themes as in the 1960-70s. Those representing the traditional left, including Joseph Conlin and Paul Boyer, still tend to attribute the decline of their own movements to the rise of student radicalism in the 1960s. They criticize the New Left for lacking an ideology or program and doubt the sincerity of the student's motivations. According to Conlin, the New Left's failure to concentrate on class and its willingness to concentrate on peripheral issues rather than to challenge what he calls "the fundamental bases of society" was devastating to the left, setting back the cause many years.[47] While "the movement portended to be a cure for a social sickness," he argues, "it seems rather to have been a virulent symptom of that illness."[48] Similarly Paul Boyer believes that the New Left's lack of commitment on the nuclear issue, "beyond the rhetoric," and its unwillingness to work with other groups such as SANE greatly diffused any concentrated and united program for lasting peace.[49] Neither writer gives the New Left much credit for progressive political changes initiated during the 1960s, and Conlin condemns

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[47]Joseph Conlin, The Troubles: A Jaundiced Glance Back at the Movements of the Sixties (New York, 1982). 34.

[48]Conlin, Troubles, 5.

[49]Paul Boyer, "From Activism to Apathy: The American People and Nuclear Weapons, 1963-1980," Journal of American History 70 1 (1984), 838.

the movement for its self-indulgence.[50]

Along the same lines, liberals continue to view the New Left as an important factor in the collapse of the liberal consensus and the re-emergence of conservatism in the United States. Historian Alan Matusow's The Unravelling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s (1984) highlights the rise and fall of the Kennedy-Johnson concept of corporate liberalism in the United States. In Matusow's perception, Americans entering the 1960s had extremely high hopes about the future of the nation and were looking to their government to quickly and efficiently solve problems such as racism, poverty and unemployment. While Matusow admits that many of the liberal economic and social programs were "unworkable" and "overly ambitious," he does stress, however, many of the major progressive legislative successes initiated during the period especially in such areas as social justice and civil rights. In defending liberalism, Matusow presents the student radicals as naive and impatient youths who did not understand how the political system worked. Their growing disrespect for American values, Matusow believes, was one of the major reasons why the liberal cohesiveness began to "bitterly unravel" in the late 1960s. In turning to conservative Richard Nixon to restore law and order, Americans abandoned their idealism and hope for the future.[51]

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[50]Conlin, Troubles, 5.

[51]Allen J. Matusow, The Unravelling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s (New York, 1984). See also: William McGill's, The Year of the Monkey: Revolt on the Campus, 1968-9 (New York, 1982). A former administrator at the University of California at San Diego from 1968-70, McGill perceives himself as

While liberals such as Matusow look back on the 1960s to recover their lost optimism, conservative analysts continue to look back to the decade to explain many of the nation's current woes. These writers tend to stress the supposed marxist roots of the New Left ideology and argue that the students' aim was simply to achieve power through intimidation and harassment.[52] Guenter Lewy, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Massachusetts, has recently written a controversial reassessment of the peace movements of the 1960s: Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism (1988).[53] According to Lewy, the New Left's takeover of the anti-war movement in the late 1960s forever changed the goals and principles of American pacifism. What was once a movement morally opposed to bearing arms for any purpose, defensive or otherwise, became a political tool focused on overthrowing capitalism and liberating the exploited and oppressed. Losing their "higher ground" above politics, Lewy asserts, American pacifist movements abandoned their primary vocation - to remind Americans of the horrors of modern war:

> While at one time pacifist groups were single-mindedly devoted to the principles of non-violence and reconciliation, today most pacifist groups defend the moral legitimacy of armed

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a victim constrained between extremists on the right (Governor Reagan) and the uncompromising demands of those on the left (the student radicals).

[52]See for example: Scott McConnell, "Resurrecting the New Left" Commentary, 84 (October, 1987), 36.

[53]Guenter Lewy, Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism (Amherst, 1988), 1 For responses to Lewy, see Michael Cromartie ed., Peace Betrayed? Essays on Pacifism and Politics (Washington, 1990).

> struggle and guerrilla warfare, and they praise and support the Communist regimes emerging from such conflicts.[54]

Not only was the primary function of American pacifism lost in the transformation, Lewy concludes, but so too was the movement's humanitarian integrity.

While Lewy's argument seems to imply that the New Left's pacifist ethos was merely a political front for left-wing causes, others have continued to assert that the student movement threatened rather than enhanced free speech. In "Governor Reagan and Academic Freedom at Berkeley 1966-70," historian Garin Burbank has portrayed the future president as the "authentic" representative of Californian community.[55] To Burbank, it was not the students concerned about the wishes of the "plain people" but rather Governor Reagan, "virtuously struggling for a sense of security against privileged and arrogant interests."[56] The California public was "perplexed" to learn that the governing bodies of professors would condone "illegal and violent disruptions of campus life" and they were "fed up" with the "indulgent compromises offered by beleaguered and intimidated University officials."[57] Reagan is portrayed in Burbank's narrative as a hero, bravely defending the freedom of the academy: "He would not

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[54]Lewy, "The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism," in Cromartie ed. Peace Betrayed, 3.

[55]Garin Burbank, "Governor Reagan and Academic Freedom at Berkeley, 1966-70," Canadian Review of American Studies, 20 1 (1989), 17-30.

[56]Burbank, "Governor Reagan," 28.

[57]Burbank, "Governor Reagan," 21.

prevent Herbert Marcuse from teaching his revolutionary philosophy in the Universities, but he was convinced that a wider spectrum of opinion should be available in the campus classrooms."[58] It was not the student radicals who desired free speech, but the Governor: "If we were to ask whose actions posed a threat to freedom of thought at Berkeley, the answer might indeed be that the faculty often quailed before the misdeeds of intolerant radicalism, while the Governor defended the traditions of the liberal forum."[59] Overall, Burbank perceives that Reagan's term in office as very successful, and he concludes that the "people" had "completely" triumphed over the disruptive students and the New Left.[60]

Burbank's interpretation, like so many others on the subject of student unrest, is so marred by partisanship that it raises the question as to whether or not it qualifies as scholarship. Like most ex-student radical commentators, Burbank is less interested in trying to provide a historical perspective than he is in defending his subject. Rather than contributing something new, he simply reinvigorates older debates between radicals and the authorities. By not even trying to understand the student's point of view, Burbank's effort qualifies more as polemics than history.

Similarly, Alan Bloom, Roger Kimball and Dinesh D'Souza have recently written commentaries stressing how the movements of the

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[58]Burbank, "Governor Reagan," 21.

[59]Burbank, "Governor Reagan," 18.

[60]For a less favourable assessment: see Joel Krieger, Reagan, Thatcher and the Politics of Decline (New York, 1986).

1960s successfully eroded the foundations of western civilization through their attacks on the university system.[61] Pointing to the growing politicization of the universities through such 1960s inspired programs as Women's Studies and Afro-American Studies, these conservative scholars long for an earlier age of scholarship when knowledge was pursued "for its own sake." While Bloom, Kimball and D'Souza are critical of the value of these programs, their primary concern, they assert, is not to eliminate them from the university curriculum but rather to ensure the continuation of academic freedom and education "founded upon reason." Observing a growing "politically correct" intolerance for alternative views on the campuses, these authors fear for their own academic survival.[62] While Bloom and D'Souza focus primarily on curriculum change and its relationship to how students think, Kimball examines the values of the professors themselves, particularly with respect to faculty hiring decisions. All three conclude that the traditional values of liberal education are under attack by a reinvigorated New Left that they assert is now beginning to control the university administrative boards.

While these scholars have received some notoriety, the

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[61]Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (New York, 1987); Dinesh D'Souza, Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus (New York, 1991); Roger Kimball, Tenured Radicals (New York, 1990)

[62]See also: D'Arcy Jenish, "The Silencers: A New Wave of Repression is Sweeping Through the Universities," Macleans (May 27, 1991), 40-50. Edward Shils, "Totalitarians and Antinomians," in John Bunzel ed. Political Passages: Journeys of Change Through Two Decades, 1968-1988 (New York, 1988).

negative reception these books have received in numerous scholarly journals suggests that the dominance of this kind of perspective is over.[63] A number of recent commentaries, moreover, have recently appeared asserting that the New Left movement actually improved the quality of education by radically critiquing prevailing, stagnant ideas.[64] With the concept of academic neutrality becoming almost impossible to defend, the critics' arguments concerning the "politization" of the universities seems to have lost its effectiveness. While some of the other traditional themes used by critics to discredit the movement have fared somewhat better (especially the sociological and psychological explanations stressing the supposed hidden motivations behind the New Left's actions), the majority of anti-New Left scholarship has recently undergone intensive scrutiny by those presently conducting research. This reassessment has not been limited to former student radicals alone, but also by others reconsidering their original positions.

IV

Some former critics of the New Left have revised their interpretations of the movement and its legacy. Mostly writers

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[63]See: Thelma McCormack, "Politically Correct," in Canadian Forum (September 1991). 8-10. Maurice Isserman, "Travels with Dinesh," Tikkun 6 5 (1991). 81-84. See also: Women's Review of Books (February, 1992) which devotes an entire issue to the "politically correct" controversies.

[64] See for example: Martin Oppenheimer et al., Radical Sociologists and the Movement (Philadelphia, 1991); Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession (Cambridge, 1988).

from the left, these now sympathetic analysts attribute their changing perspective to the benefits of distance separating them from the time of the events. Peter Clecak is one former critic who has changed his point of view considerably since the early 1970s. No longer seeing in the movement merely the catalyst for a conservative revivalism, Clecak, in his most recent effort America's Quest for the Ideal Self: Dissent and Fulfilment in the 60s and 70s, (1987) now asserts that the New Left contributed greatly to validating fulfilment as a worthy goal for groups as well as individuals.[65] Unlike most historians and political scientists, Clecak refuses to separate the 1960s from the 1970s, perceiving coherence and progress throughout the two decades, a continuity in which cultural similarities outweigh any real differences. To Clecak, the major message emerging during this period, the "central energizing thrust," focused on a growing "quest for self-fulfilment...the search for the abundant life." Individuals during the 1960s and 1970s increasingly sought to define and exact possibilities of feeling as freely as possible. Part of this quest, he proposes, involved becoming more concerned with the idea of social justice: those searching for the abundant life demanded an increase in liberty for others as well as themselves. It was largely a personal, non-political affair, Clecak believes, with diverse groups throughout political spectrum (including the New Left, as well as born again Christians, the

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[65]Peter Clecak, America's Quest for the Ideal Self: Dissent and Fulfilment in the 60s and 70s (New York, 1983).

Moral Majority, blacks, feminists, gays, ethnics etc.) all driving for greater self-actualization.

Clecak's assessment of this transformation in attitudes is essentially optimistic. He now sees the period as a progressive democratization of personhood in America, with irreversible patterns developing both politically and culturally. People in all groups gained a "life more various, more full of possibility at the end of the seventies" than was available "in the quieter, more stable middle fifties." While there were some "regrettable" changes in American culture, Clecak concedes, the "rising satisfaction among a growing number of citizens in all social categories" make these "side effects" seem of minor importance.[66]

Conclusion

Clecak's more positive reassessment of the period parallels the majority of scholarly writings devoted to the subject of the New Left written in the last few years. Both former student radicals and a number of sympathetic commentators alike are now concluding that the movements of the 1960s made numerous positive political and cultural contributions to American society. While disagreeing on the actual meaning of the New Left, the most recent assessments by former student radicals are united in their renewed attempts to make Americans appreciate the changes initiated during

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[66]The evidence Clecak uses to document this point is unsubstantial, primarily focusing on quantifiable indications such as levels of consumption. It is impossible, however, to measure spirituality and happiness.

the 1960s. Although it is impossible to determine the effects these writings will have on how Americans perceive the 1960s radical movements, it is apparent nevertheless that the dominance of the traditional interpretation, which stressed unconscious motivational forces to explain the students' actions and emphasized the harmful consequences associated with the movements' legacy, is over. No longer will only one perspective on the decade dominate public representations.

EPILOGUE

Subjective political biases have influenced how the history of the New Left movement has been written in a variety of ways. Since the earliest student demonstrations of the 1960s, analysts have chosen to portray the radicals in ways which further their own political agendas. Liberal commentators, hidden behind the mask of detached scholarly "objectivity," have attempted to dismiss the New Left ideology entirely as the irrational product of various psychological and sociological driving forces. Writers on the Left have generally reinforced this depiction, dissociating their own movement from 1960s radicalism by questioning the sincerity of the students' motivations. Conservative writers, moreover, have capitalized on the social unrest to emphasize the supposed failures of liberalism.

All three groups have tended to hold the New Left responsible for many of the United States' current problems. Only the student radicals themselves have stressed how the issues raised during the era motivated their actions, and only they have recognized the positive contributions to society that they initiated. In recognizing these distinct trends, it is clear that as long as the issues which came out of the debates surrounding the New Left are relevant, commentators will wield whatever authority they can to mould their depiction to correspond to their own objectives. Historians and sociologists will continue to use the various images of the student radicals primarily as ideological tools, designed to mobilize public opinion behind major policy initiatives.

In making this point, I am not trying to be cynical or to condemn the value of the social sciences but rather to make explicit an obvious trend. Unlike Liberal theorists of the past, I do not believe that academics can or even should try to achieve the ideals of objectivity. It is a normal and inherent part of the human situation to see things from a particular perspective. As political philosopher Harold J. Jaffa wrote, "An active concern with political objects, a care for them which naturally expresses itself in both love and hate, is the very condition of their 'visibility' to the eye of the mind."[1] To purposefully balance arguments and compromise positions is in itself an ideological stance, benefiting the objectives of Liberal pluralists.

What I do fear, however, is that more often than not, academics remain camouflaged behind the pretence of objectivity and consciously present their research to their students as fact. Abusing their positions of influence, university professors covertly attempt to convert the young to their own way of thinking. Presented with only one political perspective, students grow up assuming that what they are taught at school is truth. This reality is especially true for history, because it has, as historiographer Frances Fitzgerald noted, "much more than any other" subject, "the demeanour and trappings of authority."[2] I believe that it is time for historians to be more explicit with

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[1]Harold J. Jaffa, Equality and Liberty: Theory and Practice in American Politics (New York, 1965).

[2]Frances Fitzgerald, America Revised, History Textbooks in the Twentieth Century (Boston, 1979), 7-20.

their students about their own particular point of view. They should be encouraged to reveal, honestly and straightforwardly, the political biases which guide their work.

With the goal of achieving "truths" about the past through an eventual consensus inconceivable, now may also be the time for those within the discipline to decide the future purposes of research in the coming years. It seems that a new set of guidelines is sorely needed to distinguish the characteristics which make up good scholarship. While there can be no such thing as a detached, impartial observer, clearly the type of questions asked should be more closely examined to determine worthwhile research investigations. Some historical questions are undoubtedly less intellectually beneficial then others. Studies which challenge the sincerity of their subjects' motivations, for example, serve little purpose other than to satisfy purely partisan goals.[3] Rather than substantially adding to our understanding of the past, historians who ask these questions are making judgements that are disrespectful of their human subjects and misleading to readers. To downplay the role of sentiments and feelings through an over-reliance on structural determinism is to ignore the conceptual world of the past we study.

I believe that self-interested motivations, whether accurately implied or not, are irrelevant. It is the conscious, calculated general statements that determine meaning and thus are most

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[3]See also: Gordon Wood, "Intellectual History and the Social Sciences," in J. H. Higham and Paul Conkin, American Intellectual History (New York, 1977).

important.[4] Values are the most integral part of all social causation. Historians must assume that individuals are consciously choosing to take action based on their belief in the supremacy of their goals. We must stop challenging the motivations of any ideological group in the past, even those with which we disagree. As Leo Strauss, the great conservative political philosopher wrote, "To respect opinions is something entirely different from accepting them as true."[5] Instead of discrediting our political opponents by "unmasking" their hidden motives, we should wrestle in depth with their arguments.

We must also recognize that history is not predetermined by processes beyond our control but is shaped by human agency and the choices made by individuals, whether it be American revolutionary figures or 1960s radicals. It is time to stop implying that people are simply *pushed* into joining movements; we must recognize instead how ideas in themselves are instruments of change and how individuals can be *pulled* into taking action by the sheer power of a certain sentiment. To do otherwise is to fall into a partisan struggle between different ideological groups for control over which push factors are most important.

For years, consensus historians such as Richard Hofstadter and Daniel Boorstin emphasized how radicals who opposed liberalism were

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[4]See Lionel Trilling, "Reality in America," The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society (New York, 1953); Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy (Westport, 1959); Harry V. Jaffa, The Conditions of Freedom (Baltimore, 1975);

[5]Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy (Westport, 1959).

motivated to take actions because they were psychologically disturbed and socially deviant. This type of perspective dominated the subject throughout the 1950s and 1960s and was influential in determining how Americans perceived phenomena such as the Progressive movement, the Populists, McCarthyism and the New Left. With the destruction of the liberal consensus at the end of the 1960s, this point of view was severely criticized as a new type of "bottom-up" social history began to assert itself. By emphasizing the positive role radicals played in helping to emancipate those at the lower levels of the socio-economic structure, these social historians portrayed their subjects as visionaries inspired by their desire for progressive change.[6]

The problem with the social sciences in general, however, is that its assumptions lead to searches for universal laws about human behaviour which are valid, if at all, only within the limits of a particular cultural situation. The mere suggestion that there is such thing as a dominant "culture," or a "community of values" is as Jaffa asserts, essentially "idiosyncratic," suggesting that emotional responses are conditioned by the individual's total life-experience.[7] Theories developed through the social sciences are limited in their usefulness because they can only possibly apply to

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[6]See for example, James Henretta and Gregory H. Nobles, Evolution and Revolution: American Society, 1600-1820 (Lexington, 1987).

[7]Jaffa, Equality and Liberty, 216.

the cultural-historical boundaries they describe.[8] Understanding how humans of the past behaved in a time-and-cultural-specific environment does nothing to help solve current social problems facing those living in the present.[9]

If the purpose of historical research is to have relevance for today, I believe we should devote more exclusive attention to the ideas of past thinkers rather than the social environment in which they lived. Unlike those who argue that the proper study of the intellectual historian should be to "contextualize" the external social, economic and political conditions of which ideas are said to be formulated, I contend that we should perceive that values originate from what historian John Diggins calls the "internal demands of mind."[10] Even if there is a causal connection between

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[8]Theoretical knowledge describes the invariant relationship that subsists among a number of different particular objects. The greater the number of objects of which a given generalization is true, the more mature our knowledge is of the objects themselves. In history, as in the social sciences, the major problem which makes social causation impossible to predict is the values of those who are the agents in the process (ie. what scientists refer to as the externalities). For an apt description of the "case against political theory," see Jaffa, Equality, 216.

[9]A number of political philosophers, including Friedrich A. Hayek and Karl Popper, have levelled devastating critiques against the assertion that the structural-functional model building approach developed by the positivist-behaviouralists is in any way scientific. To these thinkers, the "scientific method" is not concerned with searching for universal laws through empiricism and inductive reasoning but rather a system of trial and error which tests for results through deduction. See for example, Hayek, The Counter-Revolution of Science (Glencoe, Illinois, 1952); Popper, The Poverty of Historicism (London, 1957); Popper, the Logic of Scientific Discovery (London, 1959).

[10]John Patrick Diggins, "The Oyster and the Pearl: the Problem of Contextualism in Intellectual History," Theory and History 23 (1984), 151-169.

idea and context, historians who assume that the "meaning" of ideas may be reduced to a setting that it is their obligation to establish are inescapably choosing particular variables while at the same time ignoring others. The researcher's biases in selecting the "right contexts" cannot help but mislead the reader away from the actual musings of the original thinker. There is no possible way to prove whether a context is determinative or derivative, or if it has originative or merely expressive value.[11]

I contend that there are certain ideas that endure throughout time and are comparable to the present. There is a universality concerning questions of human nature and of polities which are not time-and-cultural specific. The fact that each doctrine is related to a particular historical setting does not prove at all that no doctrine can be true.[12] As Leo Strauss wrote in the late 1950s in defiance of the creeping "historicism" he witnessed taking over the study of political philosophy:

> A political philosophy does not become obsolete merely because the historical situation, and in particular, the political situation to which it was related ceased to exist. For every political situation contains elements which are essential to all political situations; how else could one intelligibly call all these different political situations, "political situations."[13]

While not dismissing the role of long-term structural changes as an influence on social change, especially in helping to shape why

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[11]Diggins, "Oyster and Pearl," 153.

[12]For a rationalization on the existance of absolute truths, see Jaffa, "In Defence of the Natural Law Thesis," Equality and Liberty, 200.

[13]Strauss, What is Political Philosophy?, 64-69.

ideas make sense to people at any given time period, I do not think that studying them is as relevant as understanding the constitution of the dominating beliefs of the era. I am not asking historians to abstract the ideas out of the context in which they were created but rather to balance their commentaries so that the *morality* behind actions is not lost in the analysis. The order of priority chosen by the commentator, I believe, is crucial to the historical interpretation.

Ideas are important, however, not only for what they are, but also for what they do. As intellectual historian Gordon S. Wood argued, "Instead of asking what ideas were - whether they were rational or not, whether they were motives for action or the effects of a hidden emotion or interest - we ought to be asking what the ideas did in a specific situation and why the historical participants used particular ideas in the way they did." Only by rejecting the "dichotomy of ideas or beliefs as causes or effects of social forces" can historians truly understand the context of living in other time periods.[14] Ideas are symbols which give meaning to behaviour by defining its limits. In the case of the student radical movement of the 1960s, we should be asking why given they reached the conclusions they did, and why no other explanations were available.

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[14]Wood, "Intellectual History," 35.

II

It is within the context of my belief in the "primacy of ideas" in history that I now wish to discuss the evolving narration of the history of the New Left. Very few of the writers have been able to separate themselves from their subjects, and neither the former student commentators nor their critics have made any real attempts to understand the ideas of their opponents. They have relied instead on the same practices first applied during the 1960s: dismissing the sentiments of those with whom they disagree by challenging the sincerity of their opponents' beliefs. If we can move away from the "motivation question" and assume that there is no absolute formula which determines how groups of people come to hold certain beliefs, a whole new approach to the subject of student radicalism can begin.

To achieve this goal, historians and sociologists need to refocus their studies away from the national organizations and leaders and back to those at the "grass roots" levels. For a movement that prided itself on its unhierarchical structure, New Left commentators have been relatively unconcerned with uncovering the attitudes and concerns of those at the lower levels. A "bottom up" study is sorely needed, one exclusively concerned with uncovering the changing day to day lives and values of ordinary people. After all, the changes initiated during the 1960s were not entirely political: social attitudes, dress conventions, styles of speaking and cultural tastes underwent major transformations, as did non-political organizations ranging from the Catholic Church to

the Boy Scouts.

A study at the grass roots level is needed not only because it will help to uncover the "lost world" of the majority of Americans (both male and female, black and white, as well as rich and poor) that lived through the 1960s but also because it will not permit the kind of reductionist assumptions about deviant psychology that has so distorted the movement's image since its early days. No political group is as homogeneous at the bottom as it is at the top: I believe that the complexity of differing experiences within the movement and the variations among individual goals, outlooks and interests at the lower levels would make generalizations about shared character traits of human behaviour almost impossible.[15] While we can never take the politics out of the history of the 1960s, we can take much of the distortion out of the subject by moving away from deterministic assumptions in history. If we are to achieve a higher understanding of both the New Left and American society as a whole during the 1960s, we must shift our attention away from the old psychological and sociological debates and focus instead on recognizing the underlying assumptions behind the ideas of our subjects.

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[15]Some political themes emerging out of the 1960s, it seems to me, have not received the kind of attention they deserve by commentators. The libertarian thrust behind the anti-draft movement, the emergence of "Greenpeace" and other environmental groups, and the changing perceptions of women and sexuality need far greater attention. While New Left leaders might not have considered these issues that important, they were meaningful to those at the lower levels.

III

For there is still much that we can learn from the ideas of the 1960s radicals that is relevant today. The real significance of the New Left as an intellectual experiment, in my opinion, was its attempt to fuse socialist with libertarian ideals. The movement aspired to grant more personal freedom to the individual through a collective movement for social change. Its eventual collapse coincided with its failure to satisfactorily merge these two alternative visions.

The progressive changes student radicals helped to initiate - such as ending legalized segregation in the south, eliminating the government's use of conscription during wartime, and removing authoritarian regulations in the universities over such matters as the right to free speech - were libertarian triumphs against the excesses of government and bureaucratic control.[16] The New Left revealed to Americans the true depth of government corruption at home, and they exposed the hypocrisy of their country's imperialism abroad. They were unable, however, to make socialism attractive to the majority. Attempts to consummate collective ventures among varying groups proved futile, and the ideals of participatory democracy eventually gave way to increased authoritarian leadership

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[16]If anything, the New Left and its remnants were responsible for *eliminating* unwarranted government regulations, not expanding them. Another example would be the pro-choice movement against government interference on a woman's right to have an abortion.

at the higher levels of the movement.[17]

As a libertarian thinker, I still cannot understand how any form of socialism or collectivism can lead towards greater individual freedom or to increased social justice. Realizing the social and economic constraints faced by blacks, women and the poor, I still cannot except the contention that more regulations and government intervention into people's lives can make them more free and content. Because of the ideological inconsistencies that I perceive within the logic of the New Left, I wish there would be an increased number of studies both by former student radicals and by their critics devoted exclusively to untangling the ideas behind the movement. For the New Left to achieve the true significance it deserves, more investigation into its major ideological assumptions at the lower levels is essential.

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[17]As the movement became increasingly divided in its later stages, decisions made by such organizations as the SDS reflected less the desires of the majority and more will of the leaders in control. This trend became highly visible after the SDS was seized by members of Progressive Labour in the summer of 1969. See James Miller, Democracy is in the Streets (New York, 1987).

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